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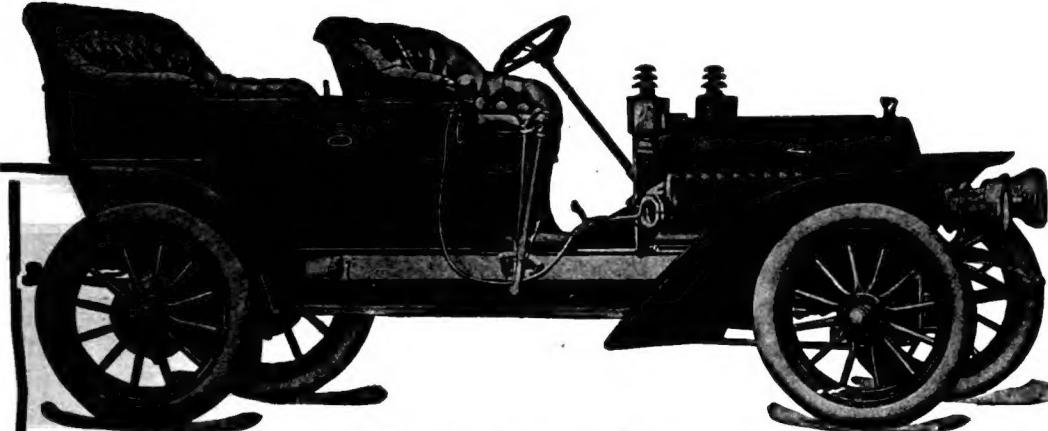
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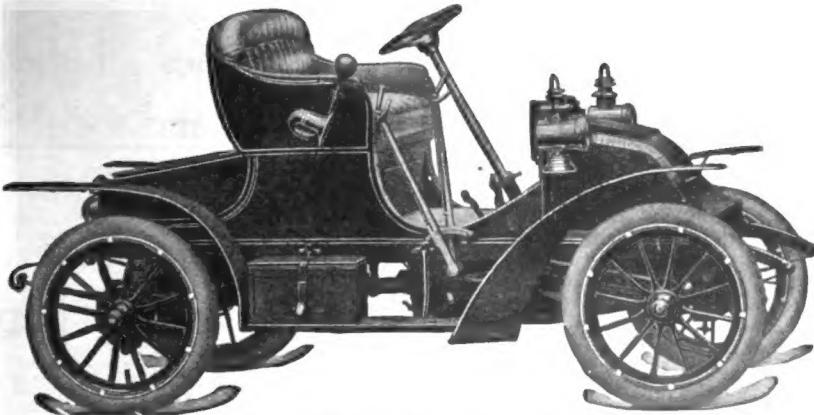
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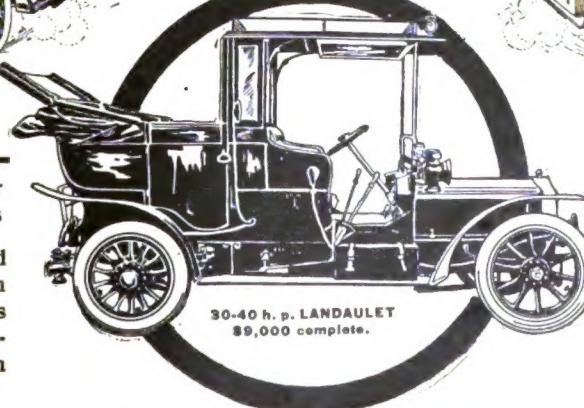
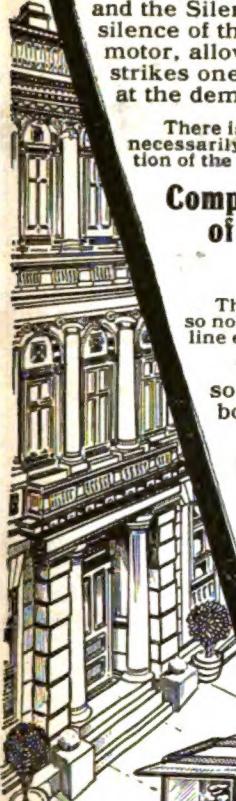
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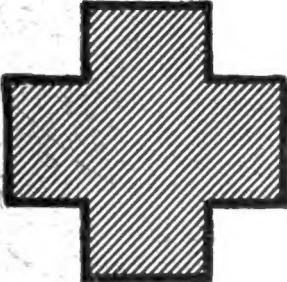
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A MAGAZINE

Vol. XXII

JUNE, 1907

No. 2

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ONE MAN'S HOUR

By J. H. Twells, Jr.

"Not heaven itself upon the past has power,
But what has been, has been, and I have
had my hour."

DRYDEN.

I

OSCAR LONGSTAFF had devoted nearly half an hour to composing the courteous and kindly letter, to which he put his signature with a sigh of relief. His partner, a man somewhat beyond middle age, who, having been associated for many years in the publishing house of Longstaff's two years' defunct father, and consequently hardened to the appeals of impecunious writers, had advised a curt typewritten note. This, he alleged, was the only practical means of curtailing persistent communications from the author of a novel that had been rejected by them some weeks before.

But the writer was a woman, and although Longstaff had never seen her, his leniency was born of an inherent reverence for the sex that had met with no disillusioning experience during his twenty-eight years. She had written several times begging to be given the reason of her book's rejection, suggesting changes she meant to make in it; and lastly had come a long epistle, addressed to him personally, setting forth at wearisome length the difficulties of her life and her pressing need of funds.

Since assuming his father's place at the head of the wealthy firm now known as Longstaff & Blackwell this was his initial case of the sort, and he had not the heart to ignore it. He even agreed

to have the manuscript resubmitted, promising to give it his personal attention, although he could not conscientiously, considering the report his readers had made upon it, offer the author much encouragement. This, of course, he explained, would mean no disparagement of the work, but merely that it did not harmonize with the style of publications issued by his house, while there were many other London publishers who might gladly undertake it.

In all it was a far more considerate letter than the very mediocre merits of the manuscript justified, but being interlarded with an obvious reliance upon the woman's good sense to read between the lines, he flattered himself it would prove less cruelly efficacious than would a harsh rebuff.

He slipped the page into an envelope, and sealed it with the satisfaction of a novice in such matters, and no slightest anticipation of consequent harassment that later forced him to the severe measures he had so studied to avoid.

It was past midday, and Blackwell having gone to lunch, he was alone in the book-lined, luxuriant sanctum, where scarcely four years since his graduation from Oxford, he now reigned supreme, with a ready-made fortune of unusual magnitude to back him.

It was a present vivid appreciation of his easily gained affluence, at the very outset of his career, that had moved him to compassion for the unknown woman, who, according to her accounts, was struggling valiantly to

attain the mere necessities of life. As she had signed herself "Miss" in brackets, he judged she was young, and endeavoring to support herself by work befitting a woman of birth and refinement. How easy, he thought, it would be for him to give her a chance if only she were willing to accept financial help, instead of aspiring to launch worthless literature upon the public.

So far, the only women writers with whom he had personal acquaintance were either strong-minded spinsters, gray-haired and of masculine demeanor, or voluble matrons who stood for more than their rights like warriors, and absorbed valuable time in useless iteration. He had consequently come to dread the intrusion of an authoress into this room which he shared with Blackwell, and those whose relations with the house gave them the right to enter he left to the mercies of the elder man, who, through his long training, was more fit to cope with them.

When, therefore, in the midst of his idle reflections, a clerk entered to say a lady wished to see him, he glanced at the written card in consternation, lest it should bear the name of one to whom he could not refuse admittance. On it was written "Miss Thornton," in a strange, cramped hand; and being a name he was quite unfamiliar with, he regained his courage.

"Did she say upon what matter she wishes to see me?" he asked, while mentally planning how to excuse himself.

"No, sir; she would like to see you personally, and says she will keep you only five minutes."

Longstaff studied the card, and hesitated. There was something in the writing, or the name, that pricked his curiosity.

"Is she—does she look like a serious person?" he asked, smiling significantly.

The clerk responded to the smile genially, as he replied: "She is quite young, sir, I think, although it's hard to tell through the veil; but she doesn't waste words."

Longstaff laid the card down, as though determined to face the ordeal

like a man. "All right, show her in, please," he said.

A moment later the swish of silken skirts sounded in the corridor, and he arose to set a chair near his own for a tall, smartly gowned girl whose face was hidden by an almost opaque brown veil, that fell loosely from her hat.

"I am so sorry to disturb you," she said in a contralto voice of that velvety, caressing softness peculiar to women of the Southern States, "but I promise not to remain more than five minutes."

Although she had betrayed a slight embarrassment on entering, there was an air of self-possession and dignity in her bearing, and an unaffected straightforwardness in her speech that put him immediately at his ease.

"I hope it need not be so short a time," he said. "Will you sit here?"

She had turned uncertainly between the chair he indicated and another, the movement giving him opportunity to notice the lovely lines of her slight, well-poised form, and to observe that she was very nearly as tall as he.

Before taking the chair she changed its position a little, so that, as she sat, her back was to the light, which was disappointing to him, as he could thus see no more of her face than the faint outline of a firmly rounded chin, a small ear, and the shadow of her eyes.

"Your graciousness makes me almost afraid to tell you what I have come for," she said, laughing softly, "it will probably appear to you so very stupid! The sort of thing— You see, I have literary ambitions, and—well, I have written a book!"

The last words were uttered like a reckless confession of guilt, and the quick turn of her head suggested the half-playful and half-shy glance he could not see.

"Oh, have you? And you are going to let us see it? How nice!"

"Please don't be sarcastic—yet," she laughed, "or I shall not dare to continue."

"I am not sarcastic," he returned gravely; "I spoke in all sincerity, for I should like to see something you have written, and should give it my personal

consideration." He knew even as he spoke how Blackwell would have laughed, had he heard his unprofessional impulsiveness.

"How really good of you!" she said with adorably soft emphasis, "and yet, do you know, I should almost rather have someone else read it first—someone who has never seen me."

"Would you? Why? I should be a very lenient critic, even though I can't boast I have really seen you!"

He felt her regarding him thoughtfully, and a passing embarrassment—the consciousness of his intended compliment—made him aimlessly touch some papers on his desk, until she spoke, her voice assuming a slightly more intimate tone.

"Thank you so much; I always thought publishers were dreadfully severe, and I was awfully afraid to come here alone. But your kindness makes me all the more unwilling to have you pass the first judgment on my story. You see, it is my pristine effort, and if it should prove wholly and entirely without merit, I should rather have someone else condemn it."

The modesty and subtle flattery of the words had their effect upon Longstaff, and there came to him a passing impulse to say he would publish her book, whatever it might be, and bear the risks himself; for there was about her a charm of personality that had affected him from the moment she first spoke with boyish rashness, and an impetuous desire to attain friendly relations with her at once.

But he checked himself, and said with rather unnecessary formality, "Just as you wish, Miss Thornton; I shall give it over to the first reader, and should his report be favorable it will be accepted without further consideration."

"Oh, what a delicious prospect! And if his report be unfavorable, what then?"

He smiled at her seemingly irrepressible excitement, and wished he might ask her to raise the hateful veil that hid the enthusiastic happiness her voice suggested.

"May I not, in that case, be permitted to use my own judgment?" he asked. "Perhaps together we might eliminate the weak points, should there be any."

"Oh, do you mean it? You would take that much interest?"

"Certainly, I should like to. Many an otherwise good first book fails on account of insignificant faults, due to inexperience. I should be glad to give you what suggestions I can, if they are needed."

"Well, you *are* a revelation!" she said slowly. "I was prepared for so different a reception." Then, more formally, as she sat upright, and clasped the little silver bag that lay in her lap, "But I must not reward your kindness by intruding more on your time."

As she was about to rise, he said with a slight gesture of appeal: "Don't hurry, I am not one bit busy at present, and have plenty of time. When will you let me have the manuscript?"

"Well, now comes the most important reason for my having come here!" she replied, with another ripple of laughter. "My five minutes are up, and I have not made the request that brought me."

"Really? What is it?" He leaned nearer, trying to get a glimpse of her face, but she drew back shyly.

"It is an audacious request," she said with whimsical appeal, "something I am told publishers will not tolerate."

"Ah!" He looked puzzled, and the very faintest gleam of apprehension came to his fine gray eyes. She saw it, and laughed outright with girlish abandon.

"You look really afraid!" she exclaimed teasingly. "But, after all, it isn't so dreadful, and you are not obliged to do it, you know."

The knowledge that she had discerned the misgivings he was himself scarcely aware of, brought a slight flush to his face. He wheeled about to the desk, and, taking up her card, bent it attentively, as he replied more seriously than he had yet spoken: "Pos-

sibly I may want to, whatever it may be."

Again he felt the steady gaze of her unseen eyes, and because it affected him strangely, and in order to give her a chance to say what it was she wished, he did not look at her.

But she appeared perfectly self-possessed as she said: "You have encouraged me, so don't be cross when you hear what it is. I want to ask you to please let me have a decision on my book within three days. I know this is most presumptuous, but I must ask it, as I am leaving for—for Italy on Thursday."

"On Thursday!" There was a ring of disappointment in his voice, and she added quickly:

"Yes, but only for a short time. I shall be back—next month, only I should so like to know before I go. Is it very dreadful to ask?"

"No; I think it can be arranged, though you may not get a final decision. Isn't June rather late to go to Italy?"

"I am obliged to go, unfortunately; I should much rather remain in London." She arose. "Then will you do it?"

"Yes; I shall give you a report on it in three days; but don't hurry, there's —"

"I must. You see, I haven't sent for the manuscript yet; it is in Ireland. I must have it forwarded right on to you."

"In Ireland?"

"Yes; I was stopping with friends in Dublin, and had my book typewritten there—several times, alas! And, being called suddenly to London, I had to leave the manuscript, as the last revised copy was not finished."

"Is the story laid in Ireland?"

"Yes, partly; and partly in England."

Although he did not give it a thought, Longstaff felt somewhat confused in following what she said, despite the unhesitating flow of her words. He passed his hand over his brow, as if to clear his brain of a certain cloudiness in order to advise her what to do.

"You had better cable," he said.

"That will save time. I can send a message for you from here."

"Oh, thank you. But unluckily I can't do that. I am such an incompetent business woman, I have left everything in a tangle."

"How so?"

"You see, I came away in a great hurry, with no idea that I should not return immediately, and with not the vaguest prospect of going to—Italy, and of course never paid the typewriter for his work. He knows nothing whatever about me, and would never consent to send on the manuscript without payment, especially as he has done the entire book three times and I owe him eight pounds."

"Oh, perhaps not." Longstaff smoothed his chin, and wondered at the suspicion that crossed his mind of something not quite plausible in her story. It was too undefined to grasp, but held him silent while she continued reflectively:

"I suppose a money order would be—or perhaps—would you give me your cheque for eight pounds? That would save me the trouble of getting a money order, and it could be cashed in Dublin, couldn't it?"

"Oh, yes; I dare say," he replied, distinctly shocked by the request, and feeling with a qualm of dismay and disappointment that he had arrived at the root of his passing suspicion.

While deliberating whether or not to risk being made the dupe of an unknown woman, who might be no better than a charming and clever adventuress, a flush of shame was brought to his face by seeing her open her little bag, and count out on his desk eight gold sovereigns. He turned quickly on the pretense of seeking his bank-book, but in reality to hide from her this evidence of his mortification for the insult of his thought.

Meanwhile she was saying, apparently quite unconscious of what he was undergoing: "It will be awfully good of you, and will save me a lot of time and the bother of going to the post-office."

He wanted to make some gracious

reply, but remorse held him dumb, until, having found his cheque-book, he sat down at the desk, and said in a voice that sounded to him disagreeably harsh:

"To whom shall I draw it?"

Miss Thornton brought her hands together in a gesture of dismay.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed, "I have forgotten whether it is Watson or—no; I *think* it is Wordsworth."

There was something so comically childish and irresponsible in her lack of appreciating the seriousness of her uncertainty that Longstaff laughed aloud.

"Well, that makes a decided hitch in our plans," he said, on regaining composure. "I can't draw it to a name you are not sure of."

"No, of course not!" slowly. "Isn't it dreadful? Isn't it *stupid* of me? But can't you put the amount and your signature, and let me add the name? I have it at the hotel."

"I'm afraid it might be refused payment; unless," he added, smiling, "you are good at counterfeiting!"

"I might, but must have the same ink. What do you use?"

"Blue-black."

"Well, write me something, and let me see if I can copy it."

He wrote "G. M. Watson" on a bit of paper, while she leaned attentively over him.

"No, I could never imitate that!" she exclaimed. "What shall we do? Couldn't you draw it to bearer?" There was an accent of returning hope in her voice, and he felt that her eyes were fixed on him appealingly.

"Yes, I could do that," he returned, "but you must send it registered, as anyone could cash the cheque."

"Oh, I shall risk it!" she said inconsequently. "To have it registered would be as much trouble as to buy a money order, and I haven't one minute free today."

When the cheque was written and dried, he handed it to her, saying: "If you have the manuscript sent here, you might have it addressed to me personally."

"Yes, I shall," she returned, folding the paper, and placing it in her bag. "And now do forgive me for staying so long. I really did not intend to."

Despite a slight sense of pique at her evident anxiety to withdraw, now that the matter was settled, he could not refrain from laughing at her careless disregard of necessary details. However, on being reminded that she did not know his name, she surprised him by asking, "But isn't it on the cheque?" for, having bestowed on it merely a cursory glance, it seemed impossible she could have so quickly discerned he had given his personal cheque for the amount.

"Yes, it is," he said, proffering her one of his visiting-cards, "but this may help you to remember it better."

"Oscar Arlington Longstaff," she read. "What a name for the hero of a latter-day romance! Would you be very angry if I used it some day?"

"It depends upon how you used it."

As she moved toward the door, he stepped to her left where the light was stronger, hoping to see her face, which she seemed purposely to keep always in shadow.

But she did not look at him as she replied: "Oh, only in a nice way, you can be sure! A hero with such a name must be noble and good, especially as my first introduction to him has been so charming."

He murmured something appropriate, and they crossed the threshold where she paused, and held out a well-gloved hand, saying:

"You must not come any farther, Mr. Longstaff; I can find my way easily, and am already ashamed for having trespassed so much on your time."

He insisted upon accompanying her down the narrow hallway to the outer office and main doorway, asking, for something to say, what title she had given her book.

After a slight hesitation, she replied it was nothing strikingly original—merely a name, but she was willing to change it.

"A name is often the safest sort of title," he said sincerely. "May I

know it beforehand, as a sort of preliminary introduction?"

"Of course; it is 'Mary Mahaffy.' She is the heroine, you know."

"That is good and Irish!" He had his hand on the outer door, as he spoke, and, opening it, added, "I am anxious to become acquainted with Mary, hoping some glimpse of the author may be portrayed in her."

Miss Thornton stepped out, remarking with a faint laugh, that contained a very slight suggestion of under meaning: "You will find the author, I fear, too clearly depicted in the character, and will probably be much disappointed to learn how—"

The words were checked by a gust of wind that, drawn by the open door, swept under her hat and raised the veil in a tumultuous and tangled cloud high over her head. She caught at it frantically, and calling good-bye, hurried away, holding it close while she bent gracefully against the wind. But in that one moment Longstaff had obtained full view of a face so beautiful it had stopped his breathing. He stood watching her slim form until it passed out of sight, his thoughts racing in a chaotic mingling of perplexity and interest.

Why had she wished to conceal her face? Did she fear its power? Certainly such beauty had power to wreck any man's peace of mind! What had she meant by her last words? There was no doubt something significant was hidden in them, something that teased to new consciousness the germ of suspicion he had so lately suppressed with self-contempt.

On the way back to his private room this element of misgiving fermented, even while his fancy fed upon the mentally retained image of her perfectly molded face, the gleam of her eyes and teeth, and the soft framing of gold-touched auburn hair.

Still absorbed in the memory, he took up the coins she had left, examined them to his satisfaction, jingled them together; then, suddenly realizing what he was doing, thrust them savagely into a drawer, and cursed himself as a contemptible idiot for entertaining

even the vaguest doubt of a girl so obviously refined and genuine.

Although it was then his lunch hour, he sat by the desk, and leaning his head on his hand, went over the entire interview, criticizing her every movement and intonation, and seeing in all indubitable proof of naive sincerity.

Presently, he recalled with a sense of shock that he had not obtained her address, and wondered how if, in her inconsequent forgetfulness of such matters, she should fail to send it to him, he was to let her know of his decision upon her book. His anxiety on the subject puzzled and somewhat amused him, as denoting the strong impression made upon him by that half-hour's talk with a girl he knew nothing of and of whose beauty he had obtained but a passing glimpse.

The memory of her enthusiastic interest concerning her book soothed him in the conviction that he would surely hear from her either that evening or the following morning, and inwardly laughing at himself for being affected, for the first time in his life, by the combined influence of Spring and the brief association of a pretty woman, went off to his club with spirits stimulated by the dawning of a new interest.

But the next day, and a whole week passed without the manuscript appearing, or any word coming from her. Each morning, on going to his office, he looked for a letter that would throw light on the matter which, at first merely pricking his curiosity, began, after continued disappointment, to assume more absorbing sway.

Many explanations occurred to him. Possibly she had had the manuscript sent to herself instead of to him, and, having re-read it, decided it was not good enough to submit, and being ashamed to acknowledge this to him, had let the matter drop, and gone off to Italy. Or she might have fallen ill the very day of her visit to him; she might have met with an accident on her way home!

There was no possible means by which he could solve the mystery, and nothing to do but wait and hope she

might communicate with him on her return to London. He knew it was folly to waste more thought on the subject, after the day passed on which she had stated she was to leave for Italy; but, irrational as he understood it to be, he could not get her out of his mind. The very inexplicableness of the situation increased his interest, and led him so far as to make unavailing inquiries at several of the hotels. He had not, as he later congratulated himself, confided the incident to anyone, feeling secretly ashamed of the hold it had got upon him, and when nothing more seemed likely to develop from it, endeavored to put it out of mind and bury himself in work.

But the routine palled upon him as never before, during the several days prior to his vacation, which he decided to take as soon as possible, in order to escape the many demands made upon him by society then at the high tide of June gaiety.

The unknown woman's manuscript came at once, as reward for his kindly intentioned letter; was returned, and appeared again in the hands of the author herself, a provincial and time-worn spinster whom he might have picked out of a crowd as creator of the illiterate trash she sought to force upon him.

The interview contrasted almost grotesquely with the other, that lived so pleasantly in his memory. Her voice, high-pitched and penetratingly nasal, continued without pause in a stream of absurd argument in behalf of her book, like the rasping action of an ill-constructed automobile. It fretted his nerves the more because of Blackwell's presence, and in the end succeeded in stirring within him the metallic element of true publisher's blood. In order finally to rid himself of her, he was obliged to resort to a degree of harshness he had never before been guilty of, and when at last she withdrew, he met his senior's bantering remarks so resentfully that the latter desisted, convinced he had learned his lesson without the need of impressing it further.

Indeed, Longstaff felt considerably hardened after the ordeal, and contemplated his month's release from harness with impatience. Paris was the goal his thoughts flew to—Paris, with its flowering azalea-trees and never-lagging spirit of gaiety.

He determined to go alone, although for a time he contemplated asking young Barton to accompany him. Barton had been a college associate, and, having entered his uncle's large publishing firm, was also, in a way, a colleague. But the prospect of an uncongenial companion was less inviting than a solitary journey, and he departed for the French capital with but one aim in view—to lose through the diversion it would offer the haunt of that face which had flashed so briefly upon his life.

II

On his way he wondered why he had chosen to go to Paris. It was as familiar to him as was London, and the idea of roaming about the place alone was decidedly unattractive. While reflecting he remembered a young married woman, then living in the French capital, to whom he had been at one time rather attentive, and decided to look her up. He could put in a few days entertaining her, and if nothing more interesting turned up, go on to Monte Carlo, or some place of newer environment. He was free to do what he chose, and there had come to him a thirst for amusement such as he had never known before—a desire for novel experience that might ease an indefinable craving that had lately come to possess him.

Paris was radiant in all its Spring loveliness, blazing with sunlight, humming with life, and fragrant with the scent of early bloom. For no definite reason he put off going to visit his young married friend until the next day, and after having coffee the morning following his arrival, strolled leisurely up the Champs Elysées, enjoying the soft air, the beauty of that fairest of all avenues,

with its atmosphere of joyous life, its palaces, gardens and distant arch, through which the blue of a cloudless heaven gleamed as though it were the entrance to an infinitude of brilliant days.

A few blocks from L'Etoile he was stopped at a corner by the passing of mounted troops, whose shining helmets and pinioned staffs gave a delightfully romantic touch to the beauty of the scene. He watched them with boyish interest as they advanced slowly, three abreast, their horses, with necks arched, chafing their bits, and making the air ring pleasantly with the clatter of hoofs.

Presently his attention was drawn, as though by mental suggestion, to the right, and with a strange sensation as of something leaping in his breast, he beheld Miss Thornton standing within a few feet of him, pensively observing the soldiers.

A woman with two children stood between them, and, dismayed by his emotion, Longstaff stepped back in line with them in order to master himself before she should discover him. Her face impressed him as so vividly familiar it seemed as though he had known her a long time, and that some bond of relationship existed between them. After the first shock, their meeting appeared to have been prearranged; he felt he had all along expected to see her there, that she was expecting him, and, impelled by the fancy, he approached her unhesitatingly.

"Miss Thornton, this *is* a happy chance!" he said, raising his hat. "I had begun to think I should never——"

Her look of startled amazement, and the sudden pallor that overspread her face, checked him.

"Who—I fear you are making a mistake!" she said, so coldly that his exhilaration gave way to the disappointing belief that she did not recognize him, and thought he meant to insult her.

"Don't you remember me?" he asked. "I am Mr. Longstaff. You came to see me about your book ten or twelve days ago."

"My book?" She was regarding him critically, and while he instinctively felt she did so with some other intention than merely to recall the incident of their former meeting, he was too entranced by the really extraordinary beauty of her eyes to notice it. They were large, rather oriental in shape, and of an indescribable gray-green, like that with which the sudden rising of a Summer storm paints the Mediterranean, but lighted by an undergleam of the same gold that gave light to her hair.

Yet, pleasurable as it was to look into her eyes, his mental depression was not dispelled until, with an adorably impulsive smile, she said:

"Oh, yes, of course! My poor manuscript. You were too nice to me, Mr. Longstaff; I hadn't the courage to submit it."

"Really? Oh, that is too bad! I have been waiting impatiently for it to come."

"You would not have thanked me if it had—it is really too poor. I shall do something better later, perhaps; something I shall not be ashamed to let you see."

While speaking she looked down the street, as though anxious for the cavalcade to pass.

"Together we might have improved this one," he ventured; but she laughed and shook her head.

"No, really, it was hopeless. . . . I wish—" She drew out a tiny watch, glanced at it, and with a smothered exclamation, added, as she looked nervously about: "This thing is apparently never coming to an end, and I have only ten minutes to get to an appointment. Do you think—do you see a cab anywhere?"

"There isn't one in sight," he replied, piqued by her evident wish to escape from him.

"What *am* I to do? I must get there!" She moved a few paces from him, and looked down the avenue while he stood irresolute and mystified by her seemingly deliberate ungraciousness. Could it be possible, he thought, that he had in some way unconsciously

betrayed the impression she had made upon him, and thereby frightened her?

The idea thrilled him with a sudden realization that he loved her, and had probably revealed the fact to her before becoming aware of it himself. It suggested a delightful sense of secret understanding between them, that soothed his wounded pride and made him more loth to lose her.

"If you will walk down with me a block or two, I think we may find one," he said; "will you?"

She glanced at him uncertainly before replying: "Yes, but we must hurry; it is absolutely necessary I get to my appointment by eleven."

"Have you far to go?"

"To—the Avenue du Bois."

"Oh, you can make it easily," he replied, without noticing her slight hesitation. "One could almost walk there in ten minutes."

She said nothing, and Longstaff, while he kept pace with her brisk step, meditated how he was to secure another meeting.

"May I see you again?" he asked abruptly.

"I am afraid not; I am leaving at two."

"At two—today?" He was glad she did not look at him, for he felt the blood go back cold to his heart. "For long?"

"Yes, forever probably. I sail tomorrow for— Ah! there are some cabs, thank heaven! Will you call me one?"

His bitter disappointment, and a dull resentment of her undisguised indifference to him, prevented his noticing her nervousness and the abrupt breaking off of her sentence. They had paused at a corner, and he, appreciating the futility of further appeal, whistled for one of several fiacres ranged along the curb of a side street.

"Shall I give him the address?" he asked, as she got in.

Again she hesitated, then said recklessly in French: "Four twenty-two, Avenue du Bois."

The driver turned about on his seat. "Four twenty-two!" he repeated.

"There is no such number on the Avenue du Bois, madame!"

"I mean twenty-two," she corrected, adding in English, "goodness! I shall forget my own name next! *Allez vite, s'il vous plaît!* Good-bye, Mr. Longstaff."

"Good-bye; I trust you will be in time." He raised his hat, and stood watching the retreating vehicle until it turned a corner beyond.

She was gone! He would probably never see her again, and it was obviously her wish that he should not. Why? Who was she? . . . Why, even if he had foolishly betrayed his admiration, should it be so distasteful to her?

Indifferent now as to where he went, and too absorbed in thought to heed, he strolled down a few blocks over the way he had come; then, wishing to avoid the more crowded part of the avenue, turned to the right, walking slowly to the Avenue d'Iéna. Here he paused, still deep in reflection, and uncertain which direction to pursue. There was something alluring in the avenue's almost deserted clean stretch of tree-shaded pavement, and involuntarily he started northward again, with a dim idea of thus arriving at the Bois, for which he had originally started out.

As he approached the second corner a cab came at full speed from the opposite opening of the street he was about to cross, cut diagonally across the avenue, and drew up at a small hotel about three yards in advance of him. On beholding its occupant he experienced a sense of moral shock, as though suddenly awakened from sleep to find he had been led, through the power of some unknown force, by a long and roundabout way to that one particular spot to meet her again.

His pulses leapt in an emotional appreciation of the psychic suggestiveness of the coincidence, and involuntarily he quickened his steps.

Miss Thornton had alighted before he reached her, and stood with her back to him preparing to pay the driver who, he noticed, was the same he had called for her. Taking this to indicate

she had missed her appointment, he announced his presence by saying sympathetically: "Were you too late, after all?"

She started violently, and as she turned, the look of real terror on her face and the excited dilation of her eyes amazed him almost as much as did her decidedly resentful utterance.

"What are you doing?" she asked.
"Why are you following me?"

"Following you!" he repeated, his blank expression telling the astonishment he felt. "This has been merely a coincidence. If I intrude, I beg you will pardon me."

Her eyes narrowed while he spoke, and he could see she had read something in his face that calmed her.

"Wait!" she said as he turned away; "I want to speak to you. Come in here a moment, if you can spare the time."

There had come a subtle change to her voice, a change that seemed to give to her whole personality an air of greater surety and womanly self-poise. She entered the hotel before him without evincing the slightest uncertainty as to his following her, and something in the confident bearing of her small, proudly erect head told him she had gauged by that one glance how ready he was to submit himself to her.

Leading him to a small unoccupied side room, she stood a moment pensively drawing off her gloves; then, going to a chair and touching one near it, she said, with a somewhat appealing smile, "Will you sit here?" As he obeyed she went on: "I'm afraid I have appeared dreadfully ungracious and—horrid! But the truth is, I am at present in great anxiety—I really can't be held accountable for what I do."

"Indeed? I am sorry," he replied, forgiving her everything. Then, impelled by a desire to serve her, he added, "If I can help you in any way, I am at your service—to whatever extent is in my power."

With head bowed, she drew her gloves thoughtfully through her hand several times before asking seriously, "Do you mean that?"

"Yes, absolutely."

"Would you—take a journey for me?"

The long lashes lifted, and her eyes met his, irresistibly interrogative. He replied that his time was his own for a month, that he was willing to go any distance he could in that period, if it would be of real advantage to her.

"The situation is this," she said slowly. "I must leave today for Cherbourg, and there are reasons why I should like to have an escort—someone who will go with me as a brother would. I know no one here of whom I can ask so much with the assurance of having the request rightly understood; no one on whom I could rely to do me such a service as an act of human kindness."

On the last words her voice faltered, and Longstaff, glancing up, saw her lips contract as though in an effort to control emotion.

"I shall do it," he said. "It will be a pleasure, and you may put explicit trust in me."

She looked up quickly and gratefully. "You will! But remember you will be serving one whom you know nothing of—one whom you may never see again, for, as I told you, I sail tomorrow."

"I know. Are you going by sea to Italy, or have you changed your plans?"

Her eyes widened, and were immediately hidden under lowered lids.

"California," she said, scarcely above a whisper.

"California! Can you embark from Cherbourg—?"

"I go to New York first, and cross the States," she interrupted hurriedly.

"Oh, I see." As he regarded the beautiful bowed head, and white hands restlessly fingering her gloves, the torturing demon of doubt returned to poison his delight in the prospect she had opened to him. Could it be possible, he wondered, that such a face could mask deceit; that a girl of her years and seeming innocence could play a double part so deliberately?

Her voice, indicative of truth and fearless honesty, intruded softly upon his thoughts. "If you will do this for

me I shall be in your debt more than I can ever explain to you. But this much I can say—you will save not only my honor, but that of another who is dearer to me than life." A mistiness of tender feeling softened her excited eyes as she spoke, and his fell before them in shame for his base thought.

"This person is my brother," she continued. "He is one year younger than I—the only relative I have in the world. He is a sculptor—a genius—not only in my opinion, but in the opinion of everyone who has seen his work. A year ago he—fell into the power of a woman here in Paris. I can't tell you all, but just now his whole career, his honor, and indeed his very life are in danger. This is what brought me to Europe—made me risk everything in an effort to save him. And I have risked—all. . . . He will meet me in Cherbourg, and then we shall be—I mean," she corrected herself abruptly changing from a tone of impulsive confidence to one more circumspect, "*he* will be safe from the persecution of this woman and her accomplice."

A short silence followed, which Longstaff, having noted her sudden reserve, was deterred from breaking through fear of appearing inquisitive. He longed to know more, not from curiosity, but in the hope of being able to help her perhaps more substantially and rapidly than he could by the means she proposed. He was filled with compassion for her, and argued that whatever she had left unsaid, the one important fact to him was that she needed a man's protection at this point in her life, and he was ready to give her his with eyes closed, and no desire to know more than she, of her own free will, should wish to tell.

"You see," she said presently, "I want merely your escort, nothing more. It will be of great advantage to me, although it is not likely anything disagreeable will occur."

"I hope not, for your sake," he replied; "but if anything should happen, that is all the more reason why you should have someone with you, and I

only want to prove worthy of your confidence."

"You will do that, I know; and I thank you with all my heart."

She leaned her head on her hand, and was silent a moment; then, without looking up, she said, very low: "I should like you to remain with me now. I—don't want to be alone. Could you do this? Could you lunch with me, and go with me from here to the station?" She turned her head ever so little, her chin still resting on her hand, and looked at him with an expression of shy inquiry.

He laughed to cover the astonishment her request caused him, and said genially: "Yes, I'd like to immensely, but—I must run back to my hotel a moment to get together some necessities—among others money!"

"That means you must go to the bank, too, and you will be gone a long time."

"No, I can get the hotel proprietor to cash a cheque for me."

"Where is your hotel?"

"The Continental, rue de Castiglione."

"Will it take you very long?"

"No, it is now five to twelve; I shall be back by one."

"You promise?"

"On my word as a—hungry man! Shall I go now?"

"Yes; and I shall order luncheon to be ready when you—at one, so don't be late, or I may eat everything!"

She arose as he did, and gave him her hand as they parted at the room door, saying: "Look in here for me, when you get back. I shall await you here."

III

LONGSTAFF, his heart pounding like that of a boy at the touch of his first love's hand, hurried to the street, and, seeing the now familiar face of the coachman who had driven Miss Thornton, entered his hack, although there were two others at the curb.

"The Hôtel Continental," he said, "and go like the devil!"

On turning into the Champs Elysées near an entrance to the underground railway, it struck him he could make better time by that, and, quickly giving his order to stop, he alighted.

"Take a franc," he said, handing the man a coin to change, "and be quick; I must make the next train."

The *cocher* swore under his breath, and muttered, as he clumsily took out a greasy purse: "You English are mad; never know what you want! The lady starts for one point, then for another, and half-way to that—*nom d'un chien!* And now you—"

"What do you say?" queried Longstaff, arrested by the words. "Did mademoiselle not go to the Avenue du Bois?"

"Not she! At L'Etoile she ordered me to the right, then to the left, and then back—I haven't fifty centimes, monsieur; what shall we do?"

"All right, give me what you have."

The man counted eight francs fifty into Longstaff's hand, and he, merely closing his fingers on it, bounded down the steps and got his ticket just as the train came roaring through the tunnel.

When seated in it, rattling at a mad pace through the darkness, he sought some satisfying explanation of this new development in Miss Thornton's behavior. Perhaps she had decided on the way that it was too late, and had reasons for not wishing to go to the place of rendezvous, if such were the case. There could be no possible object for her to deceive him on the subject, since even his first supposition that she desired to avoid him was now obviated. And, yet, perhaps in the beginning she did!

He recalled her uncertainty concerning the address she gave, her nervous impatience to get away, her shocked and almost terrified expression when she saw him again, and all these things seemed to prove beyond a doubt that her aim was to escape from him.

But then why had she so suddenly changed her tactics to the extreme of begging him to remain with her—to go on a journey with her?

In swift succession conjecture upon conjecture flashed through his brain, to be lost in a chaotic confusion of baffled reasoning that, fretted by the train's maddening noise, brought him only to a point of improvident resignation to whatever was to come of the venture. Never before had a woman appealed to him as did she, and there was in the anticipation of being, if only for a time, closely associated with her an allurement that made all risks appear insignificant. He was his own master, accountable to no one as to how he spent his money or his time, and an adventure of however perilous a nature was particularly enticing in the circumstances.

His thoughts drifted into considering, with a mingling of curiosity and emotion, how instantaneous had been his response to the girl's magnetism, how it had gained possession of him even before he had really seen her, enslaving his hitherto unsusceptible nature as though through the power of some mysterious affinity.

As he indulged the thought, he felt that life could hold nothing better than the satisfaction her presence gave him, the ineffable joy afforded by her loveliness, and the ecstatic absorption of his own identity in hers. For the first time in years he appreciated his youth, felt it effervescent in his veins like wine that inebriated him to delirious indifference as to the possible consequences of escorting her upon the proposed journey.

No one, familiar with his daily routine of conscientious effort to fit himself for the position he had been called to fill so early in life, would have believed him capable of succumbing to a reckless impulse. To these he was a model of practical, level-headed propriety, who followed the even tenor of his way invulnerable to temptations that beset the paths of other young men. Indeed, he had never before been assailed by a temptation of real significance, and now that it had come, his readiness to yield to it at any cost was a revelation to himself. The very element of hazard in the situation

added keener zest to his delight in allowing himself to drift into the eddies of new sensation, a delight stimulated by the thought that, had it not been for her coming, he might have passed dully into middle age without experiencing one moment's full appreciation of youth, and have retained forever the respectful pity of his fellows.

Never had he hurried so since the days of his boyhood when bent upon some holiday spree. He was panting like a hard-ridden horse, as, with valise in hand, he caught a returning underground train scarcely thirty minutes after leaving Miss Thornton. It was gratifying to know he was making better time than he had promised, and that instead of keeping her waiting and possibly anxious, he would be with her nearly half an hour sooner than she expected. The idea of adding to her appreciation of his coming, by delay, never occurred to him. His paramount desire was to please her as well as himself, and by saving her all unnecessary worry prove himself at the outset worthy of her confidence.

The recollection of his frantic packing and breathless conference with the hotel proprietor brought a smile to his lips that still lingered as he reentered the little hotel on the Avenue d'Iéna. He gave his valise to a servant, and went at once to the room where she had said she would await him, which, to his surprise and disappointment, he found deserted. Concluding that, not expecting him so soon, she was probably attending to some last details of packing, he strolled into the hall, and, lighting a cigarette, paced slowly to its farthest end. Here, as he was about to turn, he heard her voice, and paused. It came from an alcove to the left, and the words she uttered, evidently spoken through a telephone, reached him distinctly:

"Philip, listen to me first. I have only a few moments, for he will be back soon. We must get away from Paris today! If we do not, heaven only knows what the consequences will be. He and I shall go first-class; you go second; but be sure to let me see you

on the platform so that I shall know you have been able to get the train. I shall meet you at the Hôtel d'Europe tomorrow morning in time—what? . . . Oh, I shall manage that. He is a gentleman, and I shall tell him you are my brother and that I don't want you to see him. . . . I can't hear you! . . . No, we must go today, dear; I have ordered your things to be sent on, and if they are not there in time, they can follow us. There is more reason for us to get away at once now, than ever. . . . How can he know? . . . But she is in England, so there is no reason to be afraid of her. Please be reasonable for once, Phil, and take my advice. . . . No, he knows nothing but what I have told you, and if he is with me up to the time we sail, he will have no opportunity to—"

Only at this point did Longstaff awake to the fact that he was eavesdropping. He had stopped to listen involuntarily, and had been held as though transfixed by the ugly significance of what he had heard, before the unworthiness of doing so had penetrated his stunned senses.

He traversed the length of the hall quickly, and stood by the open doorway, heart-sick and morally revolted by the entire situation that now appeared no more than an ugly plot into which he had fallen headlong, with the rash stupidity of an inexperienced boy.

In the heat of overwhelming self-contempt and chagrin even his mental impression of her changed. He saw her older; her face hardened and marred by unpleasant lines; her smile subtly treacherous; her eyes, hateful in their very beauty, playing deliberately upon him with cleverly feigned innocence, and he loathed himself for having become so readily a dupe to her scheming.

Why was it she wished to keep him by her? Could blackmail be the object she had in view? Or did she aim to lead him into a trap where he would be at the mercy of this man to whom she spoke, and others probably in league

with her? Since she had arranged that the man should travel on the same train with them, this appeared the most likely explanation, and as she was on sufficiently intimate terms with him to address him by his Christian name, all she had told Longstaff of her needing an escort on the journey was false. Everything concerning her was false! The brilliant bubble had burst in the nick of time! He could even yet extricate himself, hide his bag, and tell her——

"Ah, you are back already! You were quick."

He turned, expecting to see the callous adventuress his mind had pictured, and beheld the same sweet girl who had taken possession of his fancy, even before her beauty had been revealed by that fateful gust of wind.

It shocked him as it would a man to discern the familiar features of the wife he loved through a hideous disguise, and as he looked into her brilliantly burning eyes, raised in fearless gratitude to his, he felt his confidence return. No woman, he thought, sufficiently versed in deceit to play a false rôle so well, could have retained the purity and innocence of expression he saw in her face. Some telltale line would have betrayed the treachery lurking beneath the external loveliness with which nature had endowed her; but critically as he searched for it, he could detect nothing in that pale, youthful countenance to give verity to his suspicions.

"Yes, I went and returned by the Metropolitan," he replied rather coldly, although his heart glowed with a return of tenderness and faith.

"It was awfully good of you," she said, with a scarcely perceptible evidence that she had noticed the change in his tone. "Shall we sit in here until they announce lunch? I ordered it at one, so we must wait ten minutes or so. Are you very hungry?"

"Not very, no, but ready to do my share," he said more genially, as he followed her to the room they had first occupied. "I have the proverbial appetite of a true Britisher."

They returned to their former places, and she remarked, smiling with mock apprehension, "I hope not subject to his proverbial ill-temper when obliged to wait beyond your customary lunch hour!"

"Perhaps, but one isn't late for me," he said, rather absently, while wondering, under the influence of reviving buoyancy of spirit, if it would not be fairer to confess to her what he had overheard, and have an understanding on the subject.

In one way it seemed the honorable thing to do; and yet, if he meant to keep to his agreement, and accompany her to Cherbourg, such evidence of suspicion would spoil their relations by destroying her comfortable reliance upon his ignorance of facts she wished to conceal from him. Either he must adhere to his compact blindly, and risk the consequences, or tell her openly of his misgivings and withdraw. In the last would be safety to himself at a cost of perhaps undeserved humiliation and pain to her; for, despite the disquieting suggestiveness of what he had heard, the girl might be innocent of evil intentions, and really in need of his protection. After all, he had given his own interpretation to the fragments of her communication that had reached him, an interpretation no doubt biased, he told himself, by his despicable timidity and narrow-minded readiness to see evil in what he could not understand. Her sad and troubled expression, in moments of repose, impressed his infatuated mind as a proof that his suspicions of her were mean-spirited and undeserved. He saw in the serene dignity of her square white forehead and straight brows, the imprint of soulful honesty that made him hate himself for his doubts. And even as his subjective mind parried this reasoning with the argument that, in so exonerating her, he was probably merely yielding, as many a man had done before since the fabled days of Circe, to the hypnotic spell of a woman's charm, his late impulse to retire from a situation so rife with interest appeared absurd and cowardly. Whatever she should prove to

be, or whatever aim she had, he meant to see the affair through both because of the possibility of her needing him, and because only by so doing could he hope to solve the mystery surrounding her. Seizing upon this last motive as adequate excuse for throwing caution to the winds, he determined to drift as the tide took him, and trouble himself no more with useless conjectures.

Miss Thornton had sunk wearily into her chair, and then as though regretting she had betrayed she was tired, sat up, and glancing at him with a bright smile, remarked: "This is rather an odd situation, isn't it? We two, almost total strangers, preparing to take a journey together!"

"It is a most delightful prospect for me," he replied, "and the oddest part I see in it is that Fate should have so favored me as to let me accompany you."

"It is very nice of you to say that; I'm afraid, however, the obligation will always be mine."

In the brief pause that ensued her lashes stirred quickly, indicating rapid reflection, and before he had found words to reply, she continued:

"There is one thing I must say, now that we are on the subject. I have not yet got my railway ticket; so we must allow ourselves time to attend to that at the station, and of course I wish to defray all the expenses, as you are only going for me."

Insignificant as the matter was to him, from a material point, it was morally gratifying to have her speak of it and gave new stimulus to his determined effort to believe in her.

"I can't let you do that," he said. "It is to be my holiday trip, and I should have gone off somewhere alone and been bored to extinction if you had not given me this chance of—"

"No, please," she interrupted; "I should rather you should do as I ask; will you? It will make me more—I particularly wish it."

Longstaff, seeing how earnest she was acquiesced, privately determining to save her all expense he could without her detecting it, and

they drifted into discussing irrelevant subjects. The slight evidence of weariness he had before noticed in her, suddenly disappeared. She became brilliantly talkative, and witty beyond his most flattering expectation. The quarter of an hour passed like a moment, and by the time luncheon was announced every lingering shadow of doubt was dissipated from his mind. He saw her as a perfect being, the realization of an ideal for whom he believed he had been unconsciously waiting through all the dull years of his past.

They laughed like children over trifling remarks, and parried repartee with an instinctive understanding of each other's sense of humor that awakened a feeling of intimacy and genial accordancce delightfully spontaneous.

"I feel as if I had known you for years," he said, when they were seated at a small table in one corner of the almost deserted *salle à manger*. "In fact, I believe I have, in some subconscious way."

She laughed. "Don't tell me that! It would be terrible to feel you have been for years psychically dissecting all my frailties!"

"Your frailties, no; they are not sufficiently obvious to my physical view for that. But, do you know, you did not seem like a stranger to me, even that day you came to my office. Although I couldn't see you because of that veil, I felt—"

Just then the waiter came to change the course, and he noticed that she had scarcely touched what was on her plate.

"Do you know," she said abruptly, "I think human intercourse would be much more interesting if we could only curb our curiosity about one another. We are never content with super-relationship, but must always probe into the secret recesses of each other's thoughts, until there is nothing left to feed our imaginations, consequently we are bored!"

"With most people that may be true," he replied, dimly conscious that she had spoken rather too quickly upon her last words, as if to prevent his considering them, "but there are others

whom no amount of probing would divest of interest. For instance," smiling appealingly, "if you will pardon my trespassing just a little on forbidden ground, I doubt if years of association would enable one to quite penetrate the mystery that seems to envelop you."

She glanced up critically. "Mystery? What mystery envelops me?"

"Oh, I mean merely the inscrutability of your nature."

"My nature is quite commonplace," she said more calmly, "composed of the usual contradictory elements that go to make up most women—a sex, I sometimes think, created before men, and while chaos still reigned, since a little of every rudiment seems combined in the nature of woman."

"Not of all; there are many quite as monotonous as men. But some keep one wondering, and as interested as a book that tells something absorbingly new on every page."

"Are there, and is that your ideal?" she asked, laughing. "For occasional association such a person might be interesting; but wouldn't it be rather fatiguing to know the word 'finis' is always far in advance?"

"Not for me; I like to know there are depths I haven't sounded."

A servant came at that moment to say she was desired at the telephone by someone who wished to speak to her personally.

Instantly all the brightness left her face, and with a word of excuse to Longstaff, she rose and left the room. When she had gone he experienced a mental depression, and he sat alone with a sense of gloom and foreboding, through which only the suspicious incidents of their happy hour together returned to his mind with unpleasant significance. The recollection of seemingly calculating hesitancy in her reply to some question he had put, a cautious gleam he had detected in her eyes, her objection to personalities, and many other indications of her desire to prevent his learning anything of the conditions ruling her life, recurred to him.

If she were indeed, he thought, playing an unscrupulous part toward him, she was the cleverest and most subtle impostor that ever sought to betray a man's good faith, and now that he knew her hand was on his heart, the adventurousness of the situation, which had formerly appealed as an interesting diversion, was made hateful by the dread of seeing her revealed in revolting character. The chill that crept through his veins at the thought told him how great a hold she had attained over him, and also that whatever hell awaited him, he had neither the force nor the desire to forego the brief intermediate happiness of accompanying her to Cherbourg.

IV

HE was still absorbed in troubled brooding when she returned, but all thought of himself vanished as he beheld her blanched and anxious face. He arose, expecting her to resume her place at the table, and righted the chair she had pushed back a little on rising.

She made a gesture to stop him, saying in a tone of suppressed excitement:

"No; come! Do you mind? We must go at once."

"At once! But the train doesn't leave until two-twenty."

"I know; I am sorry, but it is absolutely necessary for me to leave this hotel immediately. We can wait at the station, or—anywhere you like. Please hurry. I shall go up for my things, and be down directly. Everything is packed. Will you have them call a closed cab?"

"Yes." He accompanied her to the elevator; then ordered a cab, and after seeing her trunk and his valise placed on it, lighted a cigarette and stood by the open doorway wondering what new trouble had developed.

His musing was interrupted by the entrance of a smartly arrayed, rather déclassée-looking woman with a flower-burdened hat, cocked forward over her nose, and well-coiffed, artificially waved

hair, of the impossible red most popular with the demi-mondaine of Paris. She passed him with a dramatically regal inclination of the head, and a strong diffusion of perfume, and, addressing the clerk who came forward to meet her, said in the undulating French peculiar to her type:

"Take this card to Mademoiselle Howard, please, and say I must see her at once upon a matter of vital importance."

"Mademoiselle Howard?" repeated the clerk thoughtfully. "There is no one by that name here, madame."

"Comment?" she retorted, her voice assuming its natural harshness. "I know that she is here, and I am determined to see her."

Longstaff, who had scarcely noticed her entrance, turned indifferently to observe her on hearing the savage change of tone. She appeared to be about thirty, although a network of lines at the corners of her clever dark eyes suggested greater age. Her face, bleached to interesting pallor, was sufficiently well-molded and fine in feature to give an impression of mask beauty that betrayed nothing of the character behind it, and indeed very little that was normally human. Her painted lips were slightly compressed when she had spoken, and her eyes burned dangerously.

He was still watching her with the mingling of curiosity and innate antagonism with which women of her class usually affect clean-minded men who have seen something of the world, when Miss Thornton, her face shrouded in a thick traveling-veil, and with satchel in hand, stepped out of the elevator. She came quickly toward him, hesitated on seeing the woman, then attempted to pass her.

The latter peered at her searchingly, then intercepting her, said:

"Mademoiselle, I must speak with you; it is imperative!"

Longstaff saw the other's hand close nervously, as she paused, and detected in her low staccato utterance the agitation her veil served to conceal from sight. "I am in a great hurry," she

said. "I can't hear what you have to say, now."

"You must hear me, mademoiselle; if you do not——"

"Come later," interrupted Miss Thornton. "I can't possibly wait now."

"When will you return?"

"Come at three."

"You will be here at three?"

"If possible, yes; if I am not, wait a little."

As she said this with perfect suavity, she advanced toward Longstaff, who felt his color rise at this, the first positive proof he had had of her ability to be false.

The woman followed her. "You will not return!" she said harshly. "I see your luggage on the fiacre, and I know your plans, mademoiselle, as does Armour. You will be stopped at the train for Cherbourg, and so will Philippe, *comprenez-vous?* We know your plot, and you shall find——"

Longstaff, roused to interfere by her insulting tone, stepped between them.

"Madame, I must ask you not to detain mademoiselle," he said sternly, addressing the woman. "We have no time now."

"*Qui êtes vous?*" she demanded. "I have no acquaintance with you, monsieur, and fail to understand what right you have to interfere."

He ignored her and turned to Miss Thornton. "Will you come?" he asked.

The woman caught his arm. "You don't know what you are going into," she said. "You will find yourself in a nice predicament if you——"

"I don't care for advice from you, madame," he interrupted, throwing her hand off.

"She will entangle you in a plot that will ruin you," cried the woman vehemently, as she pursued them to the door. "You had better be warned in time! Mademoiselle, remember Armour is not a man to be trifled with; you will be wiser to talk this out with me, and come to some agreement. You cannot escape us, and what you

propose doing will be frustrated in a manner that will destroy you both!"

As Miss Thornton hesitated and was about to turn, something impelled Longstaff to take her arm, and say in an undertone in English: "Come! don't listen to her!" What incited him to do so he did not attempt to understand, being in fact actuated merely by a frantic desire to prevent her yielding and possibly changing her plans. Anger and a vengeful impulse to oppose the woman's insolent and vindictive attack blinded him to the selfishness underlying his wish to thwart her, which was increased by her next words, uttered shrilly from the door, as he and Miss Thornton entered the cab.

"*Très bien!* Go, and bear the consequences! Monsieur, you are cutting your own throat, as well as hers. You shall see tomorrow!"

He pulled the door to, and, as the vehicle started, was conscious without looking at her of his companion's stiff, upright posture that seemed to charge the silence with an element of suppressed excitement, affecting him like an inaudible appeal for sympathy.

He longed to respond to it, to take her hand, and ask her, as a brother might, to confide in him and let him defend her from whatever trouble was pending. But the fact that she had never by so much as a glance suggested that such an offer would be welcome, and the memory of her cool prevarication to the Frenchwoman which had so revived his misgivings, deterred him. He knew now that his suspicions of her were likely to prove the foreshadowing of conditions even graver than he had imagined, and that the price of his having so rashly entered upon the venture was to be bitter as death. Yet, while morally revolted by the apparent nastiness of the situation, he could not definitely connect the girl at his side with it. He felt her presence soothing him like a delightful counterforce to that preying upon his mind, an emotionally gratifying influence that dulled his perceptions to all else.

Her voice came to him softly, seem-

ing scarcely to break the silence, and in its familiarity blending agreeably with his sensuous mood.

"Will you look, please, and see if she is following us?"

He glanced through the little back window and saw the Frenchwoman standing before the hotel with a porter, who was evidently signaling for a cab.

On being told this, Miss Thornton leaned out and called to the driver to turn at the first corner, and drive into the porte-cochère of the Palais Hôtel, which was scarcely a block down the next street.

"She will surely follow us as soon as she can get a vehicle," she said to Longstaff, "and in this way she may be put off our track. I must escape her!"

She sat forward, every nerve evidently strained with anxiety lest they should not get under cover in time.

"Was there a cab ready to respond to the porter's call?" she asked.

"No; there was not one in sight; and here we are, so there is now no danger."

As they drew up under the arched entrance, she opened the door on her side, and sprang out, hurriedly directing the man in livery, who had come forward to assist her, to have the luggage carried into the hotel without delay. Then to Longstaff, who had also alighted, she said: "Quick! let us get inside. This man will pay the cab."

He followed her up the flight of steps more leisurely than her anxiety demanded, for her manner exasperated him. He was willing to serve her, without hope of reward, to the utmost of his power, willing to go blindly into whatever she was leading him, but to be treated like a lackey, and expected to submit to her constant change of plans without a word of explanation was more than he could tolerate.

The signs of rising temper showed in his face as they paused just within the doorway, but were unnoticed by the girl who, without glancing at him, said hastily: "I must send a telegram. We cannot go to Cherbourg. Will you await me in the writing-room? I shall not be long."

"Pardon me one instant," he replied sternly, as she was about to leave him. "I am naturally mystified; don't you think I am entitled to some—consideration?"

As he spoke, Miss Thornton was nervously dragging at her veil, which she threw back from her face, drawing a deep breath of relief, as though it had suffocated her.

"Don't stop me now," she pleaded. "Have mercy! I shall explain; only please do as I ask, and don't let yourself be seen."

The words were uttered with almost passionate appeal, and as he looked into the wan, tortured face that seemed to have aged several years since they had sat laughing and comparatively happy at luncheon, he was stricken with remorse for resenting any seeming slight to himself while she was harassed by trouble sufficiently tragic to cause such a change in her.

"Forgive me," he said. "I shall be careful, and you will find me in the writing-room."

She murmured a word of thanks, and hurried off to the left, while he crossed the wide inner lounging-hall where several persons were seated, and through which she also was obliged to pass in the opposite direction.

He had gone but a few paces, when a young man with a cigarette hanging limply from his lips, and silk hat in hand, arose precipitately from his chair, and started almost at a run diagonally across his way.

Absorbed in thought as Longstaff was, the familiarity of that lanky and emaciated form moved him to exclaim involuntarily: "Hallo, Barton! What are you doing here?"

The Englishman, checked in his wild advance, stared, then lurched forward with genially outstretched hand.

"You! By Jove, Longstaff, this is—!"

"Where are you rushing?" inquired Longstaff, already regretting having attracted his attention, and hoping, by recalling the object he was bent upon, to get rid of him.

"Oh, my dear fellow, I but 'obey the

fiery vehemence of youth'!" returned the other, rolling his large, melancholy eyes. "I have seen again my ideal in the flesh, real—that is, I think she's real, though, by gad! sometimes I doubt it. I met her about a fortnight ago, and then, 'like a passing thought, she fled in light away'; that is, her corporeal being fled, but she's here, Longstaff," striking his sunken chest dramatically, "and she's likely to remain here 'to the last syllable of recorded time'!"

Longstaff laughed shortly, being scarcely in a mood to appreciate his friend's familiar vagaries, although the comical antics of his long arms and emaciated form were sufficient to excite a dying man to laughter.

"Well, don't let me detain you, or you may lose her again," he said, moving to pass him. "I wish you luck."

"Luck!" repeated Barton mournfully, keeping close to him. "I never have luck in love. For many days and nights have I sought her, and here in Paris she has flitted across my path twice, only to disappear like an unsubstantial shadow—a thing of air! I could swear I saw her just now, or else I am mad, and haunted by—"

"Well, go and make sure. Follow up the apparition; perhaps—"

"I say, will you wait for me then? I'll be back in a moment, and 'will a round, unvarnished tale deliver, of my whole course of love.' Wait!"

He flew off in the direction he had first started upon, and Longstaff proceeded to the writing-room. Here he concealed himself behind a curtained window, where he felt sure of avoiding Barton, and yet would be able to give Miss Thornton a sign where to find him. What her plans were to be now he did not permit himself even to consider, determining to agree with whatever she should propose, if indeed she still meant to rely upon him as a friend. His pulses leaped as he saw her approaching.

"I don't know what I am to do," she said nervously. "We must leave Paris, and yet—I couldn't make connections at the telephone. He is not there."

"He—yes? Will that affect your plans very much?"

She glanced at him with appreciative understanding of his self-control, and there came a soft light to her eyes that quickly changed under rapid reflection.

"I wish I could tell you all," she said, "but I can't, and it makes it so hard. I feel so unworthy of your kindness, your—generosity."

"You need tell me nothing," he replied, touched by her apparent impulse to be fair to him. "That was our agreement in the beginning, and we shall hold to it."

She looked at him thoughtfully. "Do you mean you are willing to—continue my friend in spite of what that woman said?" she asked.

"Certainly; I have nothing to do with her, and what she said does not affect me."

"But suppose—" She turned away and fingered the blotter on a nearby writing-desk before continuing: "There is a possibility that you might—get into some trouble by remaining with me—trouble that may prove serious to you. It isn't probable, but it might be, and it doesn't seem fair to let you risk it blindly."

"I am ready to risk it if I can be of real service to you."

"You can be, and while you are ignorant of—my trouble, I don't think you are in any great danger, especially as—"

"Oh, please don't trouble about the risks to me," he interrupted, with a laugh, intended to emphasize his indifference on that score. "What we must do now is to think out some plan of action. If you must leave Paris at once, why not telegraph to the person you wish to communicate with? We still have time to get the train for Cherbourg."

"I have telegraphed, but you see I cannot now go to Cherbourg, as evidently my plan to do so is known by the persons I wish to elude, and—I shall be stopped at the station."

"Oh, I see!" Longstaff bit nervously at his lips while those words, "stopped at the station," echoed in his brain with

hateful significance. What could be the cloud hanging over her?

A succession of impossible suppositions flashed through his brain during the short pause before she said, as though to herself: "How can I be sure my telegram reaches him? I must sail this week—it is absolutely imperative!" Then, turning to him, she added imploringly, "Oh, can you suggest anything? It means life or—death to me!"

"Have you bought your passage from Cherbourg?"

"No; I wired to engage it, and found there were many vacancies on the ship."

"Yes, at this season it will be easy to secure a passage going to the States." He thought a moment, endeavoring to plan a means by which the greatest difficulty—her escape from Paris without being detected—could be surmounted, and an idea occurred to him rife with pleasurable possibilities.

"The *Pretoria* sails from Boulogne on Sunday," he said. "We could go as far as Amiens by motor, spend the night there, and take an early train for Boulogne tomorrow morning, thus preventing your departure from here being known."

She looked up, her face lighted with new hope. "Oh, could we do that?" she asked, her voice almost breathlessly eager.

"Of course we could, if you agree. It will be a splendid trip, and do you good, besides obviating all difficulties."

"But—the motor! Have you one?"

"I can easily get a first-class one for the trip. If you wish I shall order it at once, and as soon as you get a reply to your telegram we can start."

Her lips twitched nervously, as she noted his enthusiastic excitement.

"But the expense!" she said. "It would be dreadful, wouldn't it?"

"No, nothing, it will—I'll get the car from a friend of mine," the falsehood escaping him unconsidered. "Say you will do it!"

She was staring into vacancy, her eyes scintillating with quick reflection, her face set and expressing desperate determination.

"Yes," she said slowly, "I will do it; there is no other way."

"Good!" exclaimed Longstaff, forgetting everything in the exhilarating prospect of driving alone with her for hours through the fragrance-laden air of a perfect June day.

"I shall go for the car, then? Will you await me here, or——?"

"Yes, I shall stay here; but please don't be too long."

"I'll be back in twenty minutes," he replied, turning to the door. "I must only——"

He broke off, and drew back quickly under cover of the curtain, as he beheld Barton tearing wildly about the outer room, evidently in search of him.

"What is the matter?" asked Miss Thornton anxiously, as she peered through the window.

"Nothing, only a friend I want to avoid, for if he sees me——"

"Do you mean that tall, thin man over there?"

"Yes, I saw him a few minutes ago, and he asked me to wait for him."

She drew back so suddenly, he turned in surprise, and found her staring at him, her eyes wide with mingled distrust and terror.

"You—you know him!" she said under her breath. "You have spoken with him—told him——?"

"Nothing, on my honor," he returned, amazed by her incomprehensible agitation. "I saw him only an instant while you were telephoning. He was in hot chase after someone, so we had no chance to talk."

"He did not—did he see you with me?"

"No; he did not see you at all, I believe. But what could it signify if he had? He is an Englishman, only here on his vacation."

"Oh! Well, don't let him see you, for goodness' sake," she said, seeming reassured. "I thought he was perhaps—I couldn't bear to meet a stranger at present, and if he sees you, he will surely come in here."

"There's a door at the other end," said Longstaff, ignoring the inadequacy

of her explanation. "I'll go out by that and avoid him."

He hurried to the room's farther entrance, too elated to give much thought to the incident, although it had left an unpleasant impression upon his mind.

Miss Thornton watched him until the door closed, her face expressing tense apprehension and impatience. Then, with a quick breath, she retreated to the corner he had occupied, and sat watching the nearer doorway, as though in dread of someone's coming.

Presently a tall shadow showed against the curtained glass, and Barton entered.

V

He glanced searchingly through the room, and was about to withdraw when his large, roving eyes fell on her. He started, took a step forward, hesitated, then approached diffidently, his skeleton-like form twisted in grotesque awkwardness.

"Miss Thornton, I—what a meteor you are! May I not be permitted to speak to you, although our acquaintance is so slight?"

She did not stir, and appeared to be mentally debating how to reply, while critically observing him.

"Pardon me if I have presumed too far," he said, flushing painfully. "I am Mr. Barton; you may remember——"

"Oh, perfectly, Mr. Barton," she interrupted graciously. "For a moment I could not place you; I am so very tired."

"Really! I am sorry; do forgive me for—eh—intruding."

As he backed as though to leave her, she sat up, saying: "Don't go! Tell me, how did you know me?"

"Know you! How could I forget a face 'that, seen, became a part of sight—the morning-star of memory'!"

She made a poor effort to smile, but her brows twitched as she looked down at the gloves she was nervously smoothing out on her knee. "I don't under-

stand how you could remember my face when you scarcely saw it," she said. "Tell me the truth; you must have seen me again."

Barton's eyes fell as hers met them. "Yes, I did," he said. "That very afternoon of the day you came to our office I happened to be passing Cook's place, and saw you in there with your veil raised."

"Oh—and you followed me?"

"No; I didn't." Again the color rushed to his face, deepening to shameful scarlet as she pursued pitilessly:

"You inquired at Cook's, and learned I had engaged a passage to Paris?"

He squirmed from one foot to the other, and looked about the room like a chastened dog.

"I did ask," he replied confusedly. "I thought— Oh, I say, you did treat me rather shabbily, you know! You promised you would come back in an hour."

"I know; I meant to write to you, but have been so harassed I couldn't. I received news that day that my brother—the only one I have in the world—was in great trouble, and I came over here to find it even worse than I expected."

"Oh, really! Gad! I am sorry!"

He drew his stooping and nervously twisted form to as upright a stand as seemed possible, the thin knees bent forward, and chest sunken, while with neatly gloved fingers he recklessly brushed the silk of his hat the wrong way. "Can't I help you in some way? I am at your mercy—I mean, at your service, to any extent you may command."

She regarded him reflectively before saying rather quickly, as though fearing the passage of time: "You could help me very much in a matter of the greatest confidence, if you would."

"I pledge myself before hearing. Command me, if, as recompense, I may only be allowed to see you again."

"You shall see me tomorrow, if you will take a note to my—brother, and accompany him this afternoon to Boulogne. Can you do it? You must

decide quickly; the train leaves in twenty minutes."

"Boulogne!" he repeated dully.

"Yes, I shall be there tomorrow morning. I go by motor. I particularly want someone to accompany my brother who—is ill. There are reasons why I cannot go with him. Tell me, will you do it?"

"Yes, of course I shall. Why not?" He uttered the last words like a challenge to himself.

"Very well, there is no time to lose. I shall write a line."

She went to the desk, and dashed off a few words.

"This is the address," she said, handing him the missive. "Pardon my having sealed it; I did that unthinkingly."

"Oh, certainly—of course; why shouldn't you? There is—"

"The train leaves at four, so you have barely time. If my brother is not at this address, will you go on alone, and go to the Hôtel de France, in Boulogne! He will be there, and I shall join you tomorrow morning."

She started as a step approached the door, and seemed to hold her breath as she waited for the person to enter.

It proved to be a servant bringing her a despatch, and the set muscles of her face relaxed as she beheld him.

"Wait—this may be from my brother," she said, as she opened the telegram. "Yes, it is. He is there; if you go at once you will catch him. Tell him I asked you to accompany him. I can't explain now; I shall tomorrow. He must not be alone. Please stay with him every moment. Will you do this?"

"Yes, I shall 'stick closer than a brother.' "

"And I may trust you not to speak to anyone of what has transpired between us? There are reasons why I must ask this—I must beg you not to mention my name to a soul."

"You can trust me absolutely," he replied. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye. I shall not try to thank you until tomorrow; then I shall ex-

plain all, and prove to you what a great service you have done me."

When he had left her, she sank weakly into a chair, her head thrown back, and eyes closed.

"Tomorrow!" she whispered. "Oh, God! how shall I get through it!"

For some moments she sat motionless.

She appeared to have become oblivious of all things, in an inert relaxation of mind and body; but in reality her hearing was still nervously alert for the steps she had been in dread of during her talk with Barton.

It came before the quick beating of her pulses had quite subsided, and fearing to betray her lassitude, she sat up as Longstaff entered, and tried to assume an expression of tranquil expectancy.

"I have secured a ripping machine!" he exclaimed jovially, approaching her with swift strides that denoted the improvident buoyancy of his spirits. "Forty horse-power, and an expert driver. We shall have a jolly good run, for the roads are perfect. We can start as soon as you are ready."

"How splendid!" she said, trying to rouse herself to corresponding enthusiasm. But on attempting to rise she sank back again, her eyes closing.

All the boyish brightness left Longstaff's face, as he leaned over her anxiously: "What is the matter?" he asked, "do you feel ill?"

"No, only a little faint. It is so—warm here. Help me." She held out her hands, and he took them, feeling their cool touch thrill through his veins.

"Perhaps you had better rest a little more," he said in the hoarse, unsteady tone that betrays the lover.

"No, I am all right. Help me a little, and let us get out of this room."

He assisted her to rise, and drawing her hand gently through his arm, led her into the more airy lounging-hall where several groups of over-dressed women and boutonnierèd men were already gathered, partaking of tea and other light refreshment.

"You have had a beastly morning,"

he said, arranging a chair for her at one of the small wicker tables. "Will you have some cognac?"

"No, I hate it."

"Some sherry, then, and biscuits? Or would you prefer tea?"

She replied that tea would mean a long wait, and she wished to start as soon as possible, whereupon Longstaff, even more impatient than she to be off, gave his order and a tip to ensure immediate service, and took the chair opposite her.

"I fancy I have slipped Barton for good," he said. "Caught sight of him tearing down the Avenue in a cab on my way back. Fortunately he did not see me."

Miss Thornton, leaning on the table, her chin in her hand, looked beyond him to where a group of Hungarian musicians were tuning their instruments in readiness for the usual afternoon crush of pleasure-seeking idlers, their red coats giving a dash of color to a background of artistically arranged palms.

"Ah! you mean the friend you wished to avoid?" she remarked indifferently.

"Yes; he was probably still in wild pursuit of his visionary ideal."

"An ideal! Do men have ideals in these prosaic times?"

"I think that depends more on women than the times; and thank God there are still ideal women."

She said nothing, but stirred restlessly, and lifting the glass that had been set before her, drank part of its contents, keeping her eyes lowered as she replaced it.

The first tender strains of L'Amoureuse waltz floated softly above the buzz of subdued voices. He gazed upon her faultless profile. Its loveliness, seeming in some mysterious way accentuated by the music, became almost a pain to him. His eye caressed the straight line of brow and nose, the sweet full curve of lips and rounded chin, the wavy framing of radiant hair, until he was possessed with an almost unconquerable desire to touch her, to speak rash words that

would force her to look at him, and see what he knew his eyes would tell her. Then came a sudden terror of their silence, a delirious consciousness that he was on the verge of some irrational action. His hands grew cold; he felt a pulse in his throat beating like a hammer and seeming to drive the blood in a hot rush to his brain. Only that face, so absorbed and apparently forgetful of his presence, was visible to him, and from it the music seemed to emanate like a subtle, enervating spell.

He sat back, drawing a deep breath, and, in an effort to master himself, looked away into a hazy vacancy where the only object apparent to him was a shadowy silhouette of her bowed head.

"May I smoke?" he asked desperately, to break the silence.

He felt her stir, and heard her voice, as from a distance, say:

"Yes, of course; they are all smoking."

With nonchalant calm that gave no hint of the emotional struggle he had undergone, he drew out his case, selected a cigarette and lighted it.

"I suppose we should start," she remarked when the music ceased. "It is reckless of me to linger here; but it is so nice and bright, it makes one forget—things."

"There is plenty of time," he returned. "It will do you good to rest a bit, and we have no train to make."

"No, but someone might come here and see us. I feel better. Let us go."

"At least drink the rest of this."

She took the glass he proffered as she arose, smiling appreciation of his thoughtfulness, and her eyes met his briefly, then returned to them with a critical glance of understanding that made him grow pale, and turn to avoid it.

"The car is here at the side entrance," he said as she set the glass down, and she followed him in silence, apparently preoccupied by some new troubling thought.

A beautiful, dark maroon motor stood at the curb, its brass lamps and ornaments reflecting the sunlight like flames, its luxuriously upholstered in-

terior yawning invitingly. Their luggage had already been strapped to the rear, and a properly equipped chauffeur stepped forward deferentially to open the door for them.

They settled themselves side by side in the commodious, high-cushioned rear seat and the motor started without the slightest jar, flew up the Avenue, in and out through a maze of vehicles, as smoothly and noiselessly as a swallow winging an eccentric course close to the ground.

Neither spoke until the city, with its palpitating life, discord and beauty, lay behind them, and they were spinning along a smooth suburban road between verdant gardens and vine-clad villas, hearing only the machine's musical hum.

"How sublime this is!" she said, and her voice, softly intimate, came to him as something he had been hungering for to make the hour perfect.

Another short silence ensued, before she remarked, with a smile: "If this situation were put in a book, people would condemn it as absurdly improbable, wouldn't they?"

"Very likely," he returned, "though nowadays nothing seems too fantastic for writers to impose on the public."

"And the more fantastic the more popular, judging by the books that have been successful lately. Isn't it astonishing what trash takes the public fancy, and makes a big sale? I should think it must be almost impossible for a publisher to know what is likely to be a success, and what not."

"You are right. Many a novel we have rejected has been brought out by another firm, and made a record sale; and several of those we were confident would succeed are still dead weights on our hands. For instance, last Spring 'The Masked Lady' was submitted to us, and condemned at first sight by our readers. I, at the author's request, looked through it and came to the same conclusion. Yet someone in America risked it, and made a fortune. Have you read it?"

"Yes, it impressed me as appallingly amateurish and illiterate at first, but

there is certainly a great charm in its originality and daring imagery; it carries one out of the beaten tracks of everyday life, which is much to be grateful for. I think the world is getting tired of realism, don't you? There is so little romance in modern life, so little to help us forget for a moment the war-din of existence, that it is a relief to have our fancy stimulated even by the antics of paper puppets seen through pink gauze."

Though she spoke lightly, there was a certain impetuosity in her tone that suggested innate rebellion. He glanced at her, and saw this in her eyes, contradicting the playful smile on her lips.

"And your book," he asked, "did you build it upon this theory, and avoid the beaten paths?"

"My book!" She was looking straight ahead, and her lashes stirring in their characteristic way before she added: "Oh, of course; I simply excluded every suggestion of realism; that is the reason why I—did not send it to you."

"Do you consider me so hopelessly prosaic that I could not appreciate fantasy, even of your creation?"

"No, not that; I think"—she turned to him deliberately, her eyes reflectively critical, and fired by a gleam of impulsive daring, curbed by uncertainty as to how he would receive what she was about to say—"you are a lover of truth, and the better I know you the more confident I am that my story would not appeal to you."

He fancied he detected in the words that suggestion of double meaning he had suspected once before, and it hurt him as an intimation of her lack of faith in his sympathy.

"You can't know that until you have tried me," he said. "Have I not already given you some proof that I am not a slave to conventionalities?"

"Yes, and I don't think you are, in your attitude toward life in general; but if one—if your personal interests were involved; if, for instance, we should get to know each other so well that, say merely from a standpoint of friendship, you were called upon to

judge some—work of mine that should prove in every way opposed to your understanding of correctness, you would feel it your duty to condemn it. . . . Oh, that doesn't express what I want to say: I don't really know how to."

"I think I understand what you mean," he said, rather untruly, for her hesitation and indefinite expression left him decidedly puzzled; "but I fancy, however conflicting with my ideas your work might be, my judgment of it would depend a good deal upon your view of it. I mean," he added quickly, to cover the unintentional sentimentality suggested by this, "it would depend a lot on whether you had real faith in your work or not; for I believe, however eccentric a course one in his right senses adopts, if he believes it to be correct with absolute conviction, he is bound, in the long run, to make others see it as he does."

"Do you really? Perhaps, but I'm afraid I haven't even real faith in myself as defense. My venture was built upon an impulse—the usual cornerstone of a woman's failures!"

"But how often the foundation of a firm edifice no man had the courage to attempt!"

She laughed somewhat bitterly, and entirely without mirth. "You are right; we women dare a lot on impulse men would not attempt without calculating the cost to ourselves, until suddenly we awake to find we must pay the price from the blood of our hearts!"

The last words came almost fiercely, but low, as though her breath were held back in an effort to suppress them.

He longed to convey to her delicately some slight evidence of his sympathy, but the fear that she had perhaps betrayed more than she intended deterred him. For this he was immediately grateful, when with a quick change of tone she exclaimed, indicating an old vine-clad building set back some hundred yards from the road, and half-concealed by splendid trees.

"Look! isn't that an ideal old inn? It reminds one of diligence days,

powdered wigs, and crinolined ladies. Can't you imagine a cumbersome coach and four hot horses drawing up there after a day's journey over the distance we have done in an hour? Has it been an hour, or how long?"

Longstaff looked at his watch, as they sped by the inn, leaving it soon far in the rear. "Just an hour and twenty minutes," he said. "We are now coming to Clermont. Would you care to stop for a rest, and have something to eat?"

"Rest! This is the most heavenly rest I have had for months. No, don't let us stop; I should like to go on forever like—unless—do you want something? You had so little lunch."

"Oh, I did famously, but you scarcely touched a thing. By-the-bye, I had them put this up. Don't know if you'll care for it, but thought if you felt faint—"

He leaned over and drew from the recess opposite a little white basket, his face flushing partly from embarrassment, and partly because of his effort to get it out.

She bent nearer to him as he opened it, apparently intensely interested, and uttered faint, breathless exclamations while watching him unpack a little plate, knife and fork, a pretty white-fringed napkin and three dainty sandwiches of lettuce and the breast of pheasant, each wrapped invitingly in lace tissue-paper.

She raised another little napkin, and revealed a faultless cluster of white hothouse grapes, whose fragrance was carried to them on the passing air. "Oh, my very favorites! How did you know? And such beauties! What fun! We shall have a picnic *au passage!* You must help me, you know. You may have one sandwich, and—three grapes!"

He laughed joyously, delighted by her change of mood. They ate their dainty repast like two children while the motor swept on.

VI

THE next morning Longstaff, having had his coffee, was seated in the

lobby of the hotel at Amiens, where they had spent the night.

Since their separation, early the evening before, he had lived over every moment of their day together, recalling each trifling incident, her every look and intonation with a moral rapacity that made him forget how ephemeral was his joy, and how near the precipice to which it was leading him. On that incomparable trip from Paris he believed he had seen the object of his thoughts devoid of all dis-
guise.

She had been bewitchingly clever during dinner, and almost recklessly gay. And now, as he contemplated their approaching separation, and recalled the painfully significant fact that he had not once seen the slightest evidence of his having made any other impression upon her than that of an agreeable associate for the moment, his spirits sank in anticipation of the time when he was to lose her.

Yet the joy of that trip seemed well worth what pangs were likely to follow. He told himself that what she had awaked in him was more than love, as love is commonly understood; that it was a sense affinity through which his dormant self had been brought to full life. The whole meaning of existence was changed to him.

His heart sickened as he compared the other women of his acquaintance with her, grew faint with hopeless despondency and antagonism toward them all. There could be no one like her, none in whom so many charms were combined with such intelligent spontaneity and nobleness. But was she noble really, or did her brow and eyes misrepresent a heart capable of deceit and unworthy scheming? Here was the worm that coiled under the fair petals of his fancy's rose! What proof had he had that she was morally better, or even so good as any woman he might chance to meet as he had met her? On the contrary, she had given him ample reason to doubt her, had been constantly overshadowed by a seemingly criminating mystery, and had betrayed an untruthful propensity

sufficient to have destroyed forever his faith in any other.

As he meditated upon this fact, and forced himself to face it in all its ugly significance, he became terror-stricken by the idea that he was perhaps laboring under some mental delusion; that his admiration for her was merely a symptom of blind infatuation which prevented him from seeing her as she really was.

His cigarette went out unheeded, as he sat, with head leaning on his hand, staring into vacancy, trying to excuse himself by arguing he had but sought to pass time, that had he not known it was to be but a transient affair he would never have allowed himself to drift into it. The next day it would be at an end, and he would forget her in a fortnight. In love! Not a bit of it! Her beauty pleased him, and she had helped him to pass delightfully some hours that might otherwise have proved deadly dull. There was nothing more in it!

Tomorrow they would part, she to go her way, and he his. . . . Where would she go—into what sort of life? Had she really a brother, or anyone who would look after her? And yet, did she need anyone? She was clever, and understood the world better than most men!

Like a wheel revolving upon a fixed axis, his mind reverted over the already often traversed line of argument, and sought consolation from the same biased reasoning, until her step, descending the stairs to the left of where he sat, reached him, and he arose to greet her, at once resenting and secretly delighting in the emotion her approach caused him.

She was all ready for the continuation of their journey to Boulogne, and after greeting him somewhat gravely, and with lassitude caused by a sleepless night, she asked if it were not time for them to start.

"Yes, I believe it is," he said, looking at his watch. "The train is due in ten minutes. Have they taken your trunk?"

She answered in the affirmative, and

they went to the entrance where a 'bus was awaiting them.

When installed in the first-class compartment he had secured, he asked how she had slept, and was distressed to learn she had scarcely closed her eyes.

"Perhaps you could sleep a little now," he said. "You have plenty of time, and I shall be quiet as a mouse."

He folded his light overcoat, arranged it as a pillow behind her head, and drew the curtain that no light should fall on her face. She thanked him and remained silent, with eyes closed for fully half an hour.

Longstaff, hoping she slept, did not venture even to look at his paper for fear of disturbing her by its rattle, and sat looking out of the window, pleasantly conscious of her still presence, which gave a sense of intimacy to their relations sweeter than the most friendly converse.

Presently her eyes opened, and met his looking upon her with an expression of wistful tenderness.

She sat up quickly, saying: "There is no use, I can't possibly sleep. . . . How long have we been now?"

"A little over half an hour. Perhaps if you should lie out on the seat, you might sleep."

"No, thanks; I don't think I shall try any more. Let us talk; I don't want to think. Wouldn't you like to smoke? Why haven't you looked at your papers? Have you been doing nothing all this time, just so—I feel awfully selfish!"

"I don't care to read, the train shakes too much; hurts my eyes!"

To her the train's swift advance was like an inexorable force, driving her back to familiar worries, to the morally suffocating fog that had for months blackened her life and poisoned her every breath. Longstaff had afforded her a short respite for which she was grateful to him in an impersonal way, grateful as she would have been for any incidental favor Fate might have bestowed to relieve, for a time, the stress of anxiety that so monopolized her she could give no thought to him as a man.

His attentions had at times touched her, and there had been moments when she had been roused from her concentration upon other matters, to see him as something more than a blind tool whose services were necessary to her.

'In a few hours it will be over!' she told herself, as with a mingling of terror and relief she felt the train slackening speed.

Many difficulties faced her, she knew, many more lies to be told this man who had already betrayed the fact that he loved her!

The quaint old town was wrapped in a dull, drizzly fog, and canopied by a sky of leaden gray, not tending to improve their depressed spirits, as in silence they followed the throng of other passengers to the wet street.

"You say you wish to go to the Hôtel de Londres?" asked Longstaff, when he had secured a cab.

"Yes, unless you object to it. I know of no other—nice hotel here."

"I!" he said in surprise. "Am I to accompany you?"

"Of course. Why not? Are you so anxious to be released?"

"I had an idea you did not wish—that my services were to end on our arrival here," he said, flushing.

She regarded him critically; then, "If you prefer not to come, of course——"

"I do want to go! You know that. I—this moment has been full of—terrors for me!" His voice faltered as she had not heard it before, growing dry as though from suppressed pain. It made her hesitate to enter the cab, which he opened in nervous haste.

"Perhaps—it may be wiser—" she began uncertainly.

"The Hôtel de Londres!" he called to the driver, appearing not to hear her, and she entered the vehicle in silence.

Shortly before they drew up at the hotel she said quietly: "I may have to leave you for an hour or so, to—I must see if my brother is here, but if you will wait at the hotel, we might lunch together, and then I can tell you—something of my plans."

Cautiously as the words were uttered, they were to him like a draft of cold water to one thirsting.

"Will you? That is what I have wanted to ask you for so long." His voice was boyishly eager but fell to a more serious tone as he added: "Naturally I am rather in the dark as to the exact limits beyond which I am not to inquire!"

"Don't inquire, please, anything. You have been most generous in not doing so, and I am grateful. I shall tell you all I can, I promise you."

"Will you tell me when and where we can meet after we part today?"

"I can't do that," she said slowly; "not today. Perhaps later. I can't promise."

A feeling of numbness crept over him, as though each word she uttered so deliberately signified hopeless finality. Yet while his every sense seemed stunned, as it were, by a sudden revelation of the pitiless course she meant to adopt toward him, he felt in honor bound neither to press her for quarter nor to reveal what he suffered. But she, glancing at him, saw it, and her face softened.

"I shall write you," she said, "for I can never tell you verbally how much I thank you for—all your kindness and—sympathy."

As he opened the door, his face was set and colorless, for words had leapt to his lips in an impulse of desperate appeal that would have not only told her all he wished to hide, but have carried him far beyond the restrictions she had set.

Fearing the touch of her hand, he allowed her to alight unassisted, and, partially blinded by a vertigo of riotous feelings, followed her into the hotel.

In the hall she paused, and he heard her, as in a dream, give her name to the man at the bureau, and ask if there were any communication for her, and the man's reply that a gentleman had come with a note, and said he would return later.

The note was handed to her, and a card bearing the name of Reginald W. Barton. She took them, and, quickly

crushing the card in her hand, glanced apprehensively at Longstaff. Assured that he had not noticed it, she slipped it into her belt-bag, and moving a few paces from him, opened the missive. It contained one page of small erratic writing:

DEAR MARIAN:

This has been a useless trip. Why in the world did you not tell me that Adelaide had been to see you? If I had known she was in Paris, I should not have gone to Paul's place. He must have read your telegram while I was out trying to connect with you on the telephone, for I found it freshly sealed and torn when I got back, and Paul gone. Of course he had heard from her, and immediately told her our plans.

Armour was on the train I came here in, and pretended to meet me by chance when we arrived. He says he is tired of being played with, and has forced me to return with him to Paris. There is no other alternative; I must do what he asks, or bear the consequences. I had to get rid of your friend Barton, while talking to Armour, so sent him to the Hotel de Londres to see if you had come. Forgive this blunder; I forgot you asked me not to tell him. I am nearly mad. There is no use trying to save me, little girl; you have done your best. All I can do is to agree to Armour's conditions, and run the risk of—whatever may follow! I played the game all right with Barton; he knows nothing. Address me at the old place, 22 rue de Tournon.

In haste,
PHIL.

As she read her hands shook, for this was worse than anything she could have feared, and for the first time in three tragic months her courage threatened to forsake her. She was unable at once to lift her eyes from the written page, where she had read the devastation of all she had suffered for and risked so much to achieve. To play a part in that moment was beyond her strength. She forgot Longstaff, forgot everything but the appalling intelligence conveyed by that familiar writing.

"Fool! Weak fool!"

The words escaped her unconsciously, and Longstaff, startled from his reverie, understood as he glanced at her white face that she had reached some serious crisis.

"More trouble?" he asked somewhat bluntly, and she turned to him like a wounded thing brought to bay.

"He has gone back to Paris!" she said in a breathless whisper, "spoiled everything—wrecked himself and me! After all I have done for him, he could not wait to— What in God's name am I to do!"

Crushing the letter between her clasped hands, she stared through him as though into an infinite space where enigmatical menace lurked.

In the egoism of his own pain, Longstaff momentarily resented the intrusion of trouble evidently imposed by another man, which she had not only been unwilling to confide to him, but which now made her ignore his presence as though he were but an insensate part of the hall's furnishing.

"What are you saying?" he demanded. "What is all this to me? You talk in riddles; you appeal to me as to a block of stone—a child, or a fool, to whom it is unnecessary to explain anything! What do you think I am, after all? By gad, I'm not a stone! If you—"

"Stop, please!" Her eyes were now focused upon him; her face, blanched with the despair he had deliberately not recognized, stood out vividly to his sight, making him appreciate the unpardonable selfishness of his attack.

The red flame died in his eyes; they became penitent, but did not fall before her astonished gaze.

"I'm a brute," he said; "but how can I know what to do, or what to say, when I am in the dark like this?"

"At least you need not be unkind," she returned coldly; "I can't bear any more. If you wish to leave me, do; but don't upbraid me!"

"I don't wish to leave you. God knows I want to be your friend if I can; but—can't you trust me a little? A man can sometimes—"

He broke off, seeing sudden consternation in her face as she looked toward the door behind him.

"Come," she whispered, "I will tell you. We—"

He heard a swift step approaching them, then a familiar, high-pitched voice say:

"Miss Thornton, did they give you my message? I have been——"

Longstaff wheeled about as though the speaker had struck him, and met Barton's blank stare in speechless astonishment.

"You!" exclaimed the latter. "By Jove!" He looked from one to the other with the expression of a dazed child appealing for explanation.

"You were here before, yes, I know," said Miss Thornton hastily. "The whole thing has been a failure. You—I——"

She turned to Longstaff, whose ashen and rigid face sent a chill through her. "I am at your mercy!" she murmured under her breath.

He looked into her dilated eyes, and bit his lips hard to check bitter retaliation. The instant was pregnant with tragic possibilities that, despite his rage, he felt it devolved upon him to avert.

"At my mercy!" he said to gain time; then, throwing back his head, uttered the best counterfeit of a laugh he had ever been guilty of, and added with feigned levity, "By Jove, you deserve no mercy for this shabby trick, but as you are a woman I'll vent myself on Barton. You wait, my boy; I'll pay you out for this!"

"I!" Barton, wholly at sea, his thin body twisted like a lamp-post struck by lightning, regarded him in puzzled uncertainty, as did the girl, who had braced herself for the climax she felt pending. "What is all this? I feel myself swamped in a comedy of errors!"

"You might have given me the tip when I saw you in Paris, you double-faced villain!" pursued Longstaff, now fully master of the rôle he had assumed. "Miss Thornton told me she had a surprise in store for me, but I never connected you with it. You played well, but you'll get your deserts!"

"I protest I am innocent!" returned Barton, in a tone of mock indignation, "this is the 'most unkindest cut of all'! By Jove, Longstaff, I was as ignorant as you were; I—you see—I don't understand!" He looked bewildered,

and turned his great eyes on Miss Thornton, who, conscious of difficulties in the situation unknown to them, was unable at once to rise to the occasion sufficiently to adopt the cue Longstaff had given her. Glancing at him while Barton spoke, she saw he was not listening, although looking vacantly at his friend, and in his fixed eyes was a cold glitter that warned her his account with her would be settled later. It made her heart leap with a mingling of excitement and a strangely pleasurable fear, and for the first time she appreciated the beauty of his fine, strongly cut face, enhanced by its present expression of stern meditation.

As she met Barton's questioning look she felt it incumbent upon her to play up to Longstaff's lead, and said recklessly: "I am the only one to blame; I did it as a joke, thinking all my trouble would be over, and we—I thought it would be a pleasant surprise to you both."

"Well, let us have something to eat," said Longstaff, to cover the halting inefficiency of her explanation. "I don't know how you feel, Miss Thornton, but my inner man is demanding sustenance! Have you lunched, Barton?"

"Yes, but I shall——"

Miss Thornton interrupted him.

"Would you mind ordering luncheon, Mr. Longstaff?" she asked. "I should like to speak to Mr. Barton a moment."

She met his savage eyes unflinchingly, for she knew the moment had come when she must risk his wrath in order to clear away certain dangerous pitfalls. That she had made a false move in having brought Barton upon the scene, was now appallingly evident, although at the time of her decision it had seemed perfectly safe, and would probably have proved so had not her entire plans been so frustrated. The only way she saw open to her now was to play a distinct part with both men, and prevent their meeting to compare notes. "Please do!" she added more softly, contracting her brows slightly to signify that she would explain later.

Longstaff accepted the sign, and,

with a muttered word of acquiescence, withdrew, walking slowly down the hall, his hands in his pockets, and lips compressed with the resolute self-restraint with which strong men meet calamity.

VII

"Of course you are under no obligation to do this," said Miss Thornton, when she and Barton had talked for a time in a small alcove room leading off from the hall, "and I know it is very much for me to ask, but there is no one else to whom I can look."

"You evidently have someone!" he returned sulkily. "You might have told me Longstaff was mixed up in this affair."

"He isn't mixed up in it. He knows nothing."

"But you told me you hadn't a friend in Paris!"

"Neither I had. Mr. Longstaff is merely an acquaintance. He kindly offered to bring me on here, and as I particularly did not wish to come all the way by train, for reasons I shall explain later, I agreed to let him bring me part of the way by motor."

"And the rest by train, merely by a strange coincidence, eh?"

"Not at all; there was no reason why he should not come on from Amiens," she paused briefly before continuing, "especially as I learned by chance, during the trip, that he knew you, and thought it would be a nice surprise for you both. But he knows nothing about—the reason you are here. That is why I should prefer he should not see you again. . . . I have trusted you, Mr. Barton, as though I had known you long, and proved you to be worthy of trust. One feels this with some people at once; I felt it with you, and am still confident I was right."

His eyes fell shyly before the subtle flattery of hers, looking fixedly at him from under their half-lowered lashes.

"Thanks," he murmured. "It's jolly nice to know you feel that way

about me, and you may be sure nothing will ever tempt me to betray your confidence by any whispered word, though I really don't see what there is to conceal."

"There is nothing of great importance, but—you see, I have so little time, or I could explain to you now. My brother, who is a sculptor, has—got into debt, and—his uncle, who paid for all his education, is very angry and threatens to have him locked up. He says he is insane, and has been trying to keep me from seeing him. I thought by coming on here by motor I should prevent my uncle from learning of our plan to sail tomorrow for the States, where we should be safe from him. We were going by Cherbourg, but that plan was discovered, and this is why I sent that note by you to my brother. I pretended in it that you were an intimate friend of mine, and asked him to bring you on here with him, as you were going to help us to get away. My brother is in a very nervous condition, and I was afraid to let him come alone, as he might get depressed and do something reckless. My uncle must have followed him——"

"Someone met him here at the station, and made him return to Paris with him; a man of about forty."

"Yes; that was—my uncle. He has him now in his power, and I don't know what I shall do."

"Well, by Jove! I should go to law about it. If I can help——"

"You see, he is in debt—my brother—that is the trouble, and there are conditions that make it impossible for us to—oppose my uncle. He is a very proud man, and would be pitiless if he learned I had let anyone know of this matter. That is one reason why I do not want you to talk to Mr. Longstaff. No one else must be let into the secret; besides, it would be embarrassing should he learn I have kept him so in the dark as to my reason for coming."

This, and all she had said, was spoken without noticeable hesitancy, and no evidence of premeditation save the swift movement of her lashes, which to Barton's admiring gaze sug-

gested nothing but added charm to what he considered the most beautiful eyes he had ever looked into.

He leaned forward with his elbows on his knees.

"I feel in this moment I could brave perpetual night for you," he whispered, "face dangers 'fierce as ten furies, and terrible as hell'! Do please command me to some difficult feat."

"I shall not command you," she returned, smiling. "That is not, to my mind, a privilege of friendship; but if you will do what I have asked, you will be serving me immensely."

Barton doubled up against the back of his chair, with arms folded, and a look of almost tearful dejection on his face.

"You mean remain here overnight, and return to Paris in the morning? I should do it, Miss Thornton, dismal as it would be to remain in this hole when the light of your presence was withdrawn, but unfortunately my time is not my own! I have an uncle, too, who rules me body and soul, and has ordered me to present myself in London tomorrow morning."

"Then you return to London tonight?" There was a suspicion of relief in her voice, but he, exaggerating his own importance to her, interpreted it as disappointment and reproach.

"I wish it were not necessary," he replied dolefully. "If it were not in a sense an obligation of honor, I should risk the governor's ire; but you see——"

"No, I should not want you to do that. Besides, if you go by this afternoon's boat you can easily avoid speaking—having Mr. Longstaff question you; and, although I should have liked to see you again in Paris, this will save me much embarrassment."

"Oh, I see!" expressionlessly, "and of course Longstaff will accompany you back."

She glanced at him quickly. "I haven't any reason to believe that he will. He has not spoken of doing so."

"Oh, but he will; he's his own master and can do what— Jove! If he should be going to London, he might as well go with me! I must ask him."

"No, please don't do that. Don't you see that is just what I wish to avoid?" Her voice was calm, but her eyes showed a gleam of impatience at his stupidity.

"Oh, I sha'n't say a word about you to him," said Barton reassuringly.

"I know, but he would surely question you, and he has been so very kind, I should hate him to learn I have trusted you, whom I have seen only twice before in my life, more than I have him. You understand this, don't you?"

"Oh, certainly!" he returned, duly inflated by the flattery; "but I'd take jolly good care he got nothing from me."

"I know you would, but it will be safer to— Here he comes; be careful, and remember we met by chance in Paris, through a friend!"

"Yes, I understand; he will not have much opportunity to ask questions, as I must be off in less than an hour. But tell me, when shall I see you again? Are you coming to London?"

"Probably. I shall write you. . . . Must you really go back this afternoon?"

"Yes, worse luck; duty calls!" His voice, following the lead of hers, assumed a tone of tranquil formality, as Longstaff approached with easy strides. "How about you, old chap? Are you free to play a bit longer, or must you, too, return to the 'sceptered isle,' our 'precious stone set in the silver sea'?"

"I am going back to Paris," he replied gravely. "Why? Are you bound for London?" His countenance was still pale, the eyes stern and fixed upon his friend with a look of introspective indifference as to what he might reply.

"Must go, unfortunately," returned the latter. "Had a letter from the governor yesterday, charging me to present my corporal being at the office tomorrow morning, without fail."

"Is that why you came on here a whole day ahead?"

"No: I came because Fate led me! Chanced to meet Miss Thornton in Paris, and—well, you see me here! Never suspected I was to have the

felicity of seeing you, too, old chap. Miss Thornton, we are both in your debt; you managed it beautifully!"

"Shall we go to luncheon?" asked Longstaff, as she was about to speak. "It is ready. Come and have something, Barton."

"I've already 'cloyed the hungry edge of appetite,'" replied the other, unfolding himself slowly to his feet as Miss Thornton arose, "but I'll sit with you, and over-indulge myself by proxy!"

He sat next to her at table, and rattled on in a tireless flow of quotation-interlarded chatter, leaping with erratic and somewhat nervous disconnectedness from one subject to another, as though fearing to dwell on any one line of discussion too long.

Longstaff scarcely spoke, and although Miss Thornton endeavored to ignore it, his silence oppressed her, and prevented her playing her part cleverly. She suffered a lack of self-reliance unpleasantly new to her, and, without once deliberately looking at him, felt his presence, as it were, a large inimical force sapping her courage. Now and then she inadvertently got a glimpse of his face, and was startled by the striking familiarity of features she had never consciously noticed, as though they had been impressed upon her mind by long association. He who had been little more than a stranger to her the day before seemed now to stand in some intimate relation to her life, and to have acquired a dominating influence over her that threatened to undermine her independence of will.

Never before had she found it so difficult to exert herself. The situation called for infinite tact and all the audacity she was capable of, but her wits failed her, and she found herself avoiding in mortal terror perilous ground which, in the strength of her customary self-confidence, she would have ventured upon without hesitation. As a means of preventing the conversation touching upon points that would call for clever play, she exchanged arrant nonsense with Barton,

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yielding herself to levity bordering upon stupidity, until the welcome moment of his departure came.

Having finished luncheon, she and Longstaff accompanied him to the outer doorway, where he and Miss Thornton took leave of each other with reserved formality that gave no hint of private understanding between them.

Anxious as she had been to be rid of him, she was assailed by nervous diffidence on finding herself alone with Longstaff, and dreaded, with the nearest approach to cowardice she had ever experienced, his demand for explanation which she understood he had every right to claim.

In silence they retraced the hallway, pausing, as by mutual impulse, near the entrance of a reading-room. She, realizing that only by adequately forestalling his initial attack could she hope to avert or at least mitigate the pending scene, sought frantically for right words. But her mind was a blank, thrilled with nerve-harassing expectation of his voice beginning the tirade she awaited, and was now almost impatient to have come and be over with.

He spoke as the thought occurred to her, saying quite calmly: "We have an hour before the train leaves, if you care to rest a little, I shall have a cigar and look over the papers."

She glanced up, and seeing his eyes fixed on the paper-littered table within the room, studied him critically with a mingling of surprise and perplexity.

"Do you mean—will you go back with me to Paris?" she asked more shyly than he had yet heard her speak.

"Certainly, unless you object."

His perfect serenity, and the fact that he still looked straight ahead while feeling in his inner pocket for cigars, puzzled her, and there came an impulse to force him to say what was in his mind. But behind the impulse was a discouraging conviction that she was neither argumentatively prepared nor physically fit to bear the strain of attempting to vindicate herself in his

sight. Her nerves were overstrung, and her brain reeled dizzily at the mere thought of inventing a suitable defense of actions that had become hopelessly confused in her own mind.

"Yes," she said, after slight hesitation, "I think I shall rest a few moments. I—this news has upset me dreadfully."

"I have engaged a room for you," he returned neutrally, "number sixteen on the first *étage*. You will find me here. The train leaves at five."

"Thanks; I shall be ready in time."

She turned to leave him, then paused, impelled to express her gratitude for his having come so generously to her rescue at a moment when she had seen no loophole of escape. But in the face of his stern reticence, which seemed to indicate disgusted disapproval of her and the entire complications she had dragged him into, it appeared incongruous to offer thanks for the part he had played in a situation so evidently distasteful to him.

He heard the sound of her caught breath as she suppressed what she was about to utter, but, giving no sign, passed into the reading-room, as she left him, his thoughts apparently centred upon looking at the papers.

She locked herself in the room above, and wondered why he had so deliberately concealed his anger. What attitude toward her had he decided upon? The savage dilation of his pupils, the stern lines about his clean-shaven mouth, were significant enough to leave her little doubt that he had lost all respect for her; that he knew she was playing a double part, weaving a web of lies and deceit about him and all who approached her! . . . He despised her! How could he do otherwise? She had lied to him right and left—lied to him from the first hour they had met!

"Why should I care what he thinks?" she muttered rebelliously. "What is he to me, or I to him? Since I have gone so far, I must finish and keep him at bay!"

She crossed to the bureau, and, taking off her hat, brushed the hair back from

her brow. She looked critically at the reflection of her face in the glass, and its pallor shocked her.

"Certainly no one could consider it the face of an innocent girl!" she thought.

She leaned nearer, peering with morbid terror into the tired eyes, and seeing in them an imaginary confirmation of her thoughts. Then impetuously she turned, saying savagely under her breath: "Well, if I am bad, whose fault is it? Not mine! Even an angel, if thrust into hell, would be defiled!" and, throwing herself full length on a lounge, turned her face to the wall, and closed her eyes.

VIII

LONGSTAFF was in the hall awaiting her, when she came down at ten minutes to five. The relief of being alone with her thoughts, and the dread of seeing him again, which increased as the time drew nearer, had made her delay rejoining him until the last possible moment. In the train she would be at his mercy.

"We have barely time to get to the station," he said placidly. "Everything is on the cab, except your handbag; is it——?"

"Oh, I've forgotten it!" she exclaimed, with a startled glance of child-like penitence. "I'm so sorry; it's in my room."

Longstaff bade a servant go for it, and somewhat softened by her tone of genuine girlishness, said more kindly: "Shall we get in? He will not be a moment."

When they had entered the cab he asked if she had been able to rest, and there was in the subdued solicitude of his voice something so forgiving and friendly, her readiness to do battle vanished like snow before the sun. She replied that she had rested as much as was possible under the circumstances, but that real repose was not to be had when one's mind was tortured with anxiety.

"Perhaps when you get to Paris,

you will not find things so black as they look now!" he suggested. "Explanations by letter always make a situation appear worse than it is."

"Perhaps." She turned from him, and looked through the open window, overcome by a sense of unworthiness that made her shrink from meeting his eyes.

The bag was brought, the door closed, and in silence they were driven rapidly to the station where they entered the compartment he had had reserved by wire.

"I brought you some magazines, if you care to look at them," Longstaff said.

"Thank you, I—how very good you are!"

Their eyes met, and in his was a kindly, half-compassionate light. She felt a lump rise in her throat, and a stinging in her eyes as though tears were threatening, and, bowing her head, hastily opened one of the volumes and pretended to be interested in it.

Longstaff, settling himself opposite, unfolded a paper, and for some fifteen minutes they sat silently studying the printed pages unseeingly.

Her hands grew cold and hot alternately, from nervous tension and uncertainty as to how to broach the subject on her mind. She was preparing to make a voluntary confession of the false part she had played, or at least an acknowledgment that she had not been fair to him. In the face of his generous forbearance a continuation of deceit was abhorrent to her, and yet the risk and difficulty of attempting to resort to honesty at that late hour were terrifying.

She laid the magazine on her lap, and her eyes rested for some moments on his fine, strong hands holding the paper between himself and her.

"Mr. Longstaff!" Her voice was so faint she feared it would not carry to him, but he put his paper aside and looked at her inquiringly.

She turned to the window and watched the flying fields a moment; then: "You have been most kind to

me—more generous than I believed any man could be. I—I have been unfair to you. I didn't care! You meant nothing to me; my aim was everything; I was ready to sacrifice anyone if I could only . . . Why don't you question me? Why don't you demand an explanation of—everything?"

With the last words uttered in a tone of reckless challenge, she raised her eyes, met the look of perplexed wonderment in his, and saw it change to a sudden warmth of intelligent comprehension.

"That would not be in accordance with our compact," he said gravely. "I undertook to do what I could for you, with the understanding that I was to ask nothing and know nothing but what you should volunteer to tell me."

"But—you know I have deceived you; that I have not told you one word of truth!"

"Certainly; I was pretty sure of that even in the beginning. I undertook to come on this trip with my eyes open in one sense, and deliberately closed in another. You owe me no explanation, and I'd really rather you did not attempt to offer any."

"You mean I—you think it would only be more falsehoods!"

She was looking at the magazine she still nervously fingered, and he saw her lips quiver, and the muscles of her face contract spasmodically. To him it was like seeing a child on the verge of tears, overwhelmed with shame and a sense of guilt from which she knew she could not be absolved. For the moment he forgot everything but the piteousness of her position.

"I mean," he said quietly, "that I wish to spare us both an unnecessary trial. If you can look upon me as a friend, it is all I ask. A friend needs no explanations, especially if he has once agreed not to expect them. This I did agree to, and even should there be a precipice ahead, I have risked it voluntarily. So far as I am concerned, there is no reason for you to feel the slightest self-reproach."

As she remained silent, her head

bowed lower so that he could see only the top of her hat, he continued gently: "I think I understand a little of your predicament—I mean to say, I fancy you have been forced to extremities distasteful to you, but, as far as you could see, unavoidable. May I know if this is so or not? I want only a negative or affirmative; nothing more."

"Yes, it is so," she returned unsteadily. "It is—I want to tell you more; I want you to—"

Her voice broke, and rising so hastily that the magazine was thrown violently to the floor, she crossed the compartment and stood with her back to him, at the opposite window.

He watched her, uncertain what to do, for, although she made no sound, he could see by the movement of her shoulders and hands that she was sobbing, and it hurt him.

Presently, before she could move, the train began to slow down, and came to a stop at Creil. Even then she remained where she stood, looking down at the sparse gathering of persons moving about the station platform.

Suddenly she shrank back with a suppressed cry; and then, as though possessed by frenzy, wrenched at the door.

"For God's sake, help me! Have this opened!" she exclaimed.

Longstaff was at her side in an instant. "What is it?" he asked, letting the window down to its limit, so that he could reach the outer handle.

"That man! You see—there, with the soft hat! Get him! bring him here. Oh, can you do it? Quick! Don't mention me. His name is Simonet. Say he will receive two hundred francs if he comes. For God's sake, get him. It means everything to me!"

While she said this frantically, without taking breath, Longstaff had succeeded in opening the door, and, impelled by her exigency, which left him no time to consider, he sprang out, and hurried to the man she had indicated.

He was a small, decadent-looking creature, dressed shabbily, and with an obvious attempt at artistic negligence

enhanced by the unkempt length of his black hair, and the faint shadowing of a new beard, that increased the cadaverous appearance of his thin and puerile face. Although probably not more than twenty, he appeared prematurely aged as though by the ravages of immoral living. Deep lines encircled the weak mouth, and marked the low forehead above brows highly arched, and almost meeting over a small, sharply projecting nose of the pinched and bridgeless type almost invariably indicative of inherent degeneracy.

He stood by the door of a second-class compartment, evidently taking leave of a friend who sat within and to whom he was speaking with excited gesticulations.

"Monsieur Simonet, may I speak to you a moment?" said Longstaff in French.

The youth started violently, and faced him with a look of astonishment.

"To me?" he demanded, in a shrill, feminine voice. "I—you—you have the advantage, monsieur!"

Longstaff laid a hand on his arm. "Come here. I have only two minutes before the train starts."

They stepped back a few paces, the Frenchman, wide-eyed, yielding weakly to the other's will.

"*Qu'est-ce que c'est?*" he muttered helplessly. "What can you want with me?"

"I want you to get into the train; there is someone who wishes to speak to you. It will be worth your while. Come!"

Simonet shrank back. "No!" he cried. "*Diable!* What is this?" His small black eyes turned back to where he had left his friend, as though in search of help.

"Don't be a fool!" said Longstaff, taking out his pocketbook, and, his fingers shaking with dread of failure in the brief time allowed him, he extracted a bank-note. "You shall have a thousand francs if you come at once. Here it is; it shall be yours the moment you are in the train, and I swear no harm will come to you. Will you do it?"

Simonet looked at the note hungrily; his irresolute lips twitched.

"The train is about to start," he said. "I have no ticket."

"Come on, I'll attend to that!" returned Longstaff, and, comprehending the youth's absolute lack of character, he seized his arm and dragged him toward the open compartment before he had sufficiently recovered his dazed wits to offer further resistance.

An official was already at the door, and closed it when, with an almost disastrous confusion of legs and feet, they stumbled up the steps and entered the carriage where Miss Thornton stood watching their approach with bated breath.

Simonet, not noticing her presence at once, collapsed on a seat; then, as his wildly roving eyes discovered her, he gazed with an expression of puzzled curiosity.

"Who are you?" he asked in a whisper. "I don't know you. What can you—?"

"I am Philip Howard's sister," she returned in a tone as hard and cold as her face appeared. "So you are *not* dead!"

"*Sacré Dieu!*" cried Simonet in a high falsetto, and, heedless of the train's movement, sprang up and pulled at the door like a maniac, his hat flying off and hair tossing in comical confusion.

"Let me out! Let me out, I say! Liar! You trapped me! You—you—oh, let me out, *pour l'amour de Dieu!*"

His voice, at first raised hysterically, died to a pathetic whine as he turned to Longstaff, his countenance contorted by an agony of frenzied terror.

"Be quiet," said Longstaff sternly, "and sit down. Don't you see we have started? You can't get out, and there is no reason for all this outcry. Here's your money. Do what you are told, and you will have no trouble."

Simonet, cowering into a corner, took the proffered note and, folding it with shaking hands, muttered, "I can't go back to Paris! They will kill me! He will shoot me like a dog—he said he

would, and he will. I know it, I know it!"

Meanwhile Longstaff was saying to Miss Thornton, who, still standing, was gazing at the Frenchman as though he were a specter, "If you wish to speak to him alone, I shall go through to the next carriage."

"No; if you don't mind, I should prefer you to stay," she replied constrainedly; then, seating herself opposite Simonet, she added, "In fact, I want you to hear the whole base plot, and perhaps you will understand a little of what I have suffered.

"This man was stabbed by my brother in a quarrel, and for three months he, in league with that woman you saw speak to me at the hotel in Paris, and a sculptor named Armour, has pretended to be dead. My brother, whose work has obliged him to associate with these creatures for the past five years, became entangled with that woman, who, with Armour—who is either her lover or her husband—did everything to ruin him. He contracted debts to give her gifts, gambled with Armour and lost all he had, and more—oh, I can't go into the details, the slow and diabolical means they took to destroy him. Every centime he made they sapped from him, meanwhile goading him to madness through his infatuation for the woman, who encouraged him merely to save Armour's—"

"Pardon!" interrupted Simonet, "I want to ask one question, mademoiselle. Is it that you mean to take me back to Paris to expose me to that man's fury? He will kill me—you understand?—kill me like a dog! Tell me! I must know! I—I shall jump from the train!"

He started up dramatically and rushed to the window, apparently really bent upon throwing himself from it.

Longstaff dragged him back to the seat. "Sit still, do you hear!" he said, trying, for her sake, to keep his temper under control. "No more melodrama, if you don't want to be locked up for the part you have taken in this business! I'll hand you over to the police,

when we get in, if you give any more trouble."

"It is equal to me what you do, if only I need not face Armour!" he whined. "For the love of God, spare me that! Oh, you are ignorant of that man's power! He is a devil! He made me do what I have done. He has ruined me, as he means to ruin Howard. Ah! I only ask for mercy! Don't make me see him! I can't; I should rather die—die! Listen to me, I should——"

Longstaff, revolted by his miserable cowardice, and impatient to hear what more Miss Thornton had to relate, turned on him passionately.

"Be silent!" he commanded; "you shall be protected from Armour if you comply to the letter with what you are told to do; otherwise you can bear alone the penalty of what you have done."

Trembling in every fiber, Simonet buried his face in his hands, and sobbed like a hysterical woman, uttering disjointed appeals for mercy and protection.

Miss Thornton, on whose already racked nerves this acted tortuously, impetuously covered her ears, then rising, went to the farther window.

As she stood there Longstaff succeeded in quieting Simonet by curbing his own anger, and talking to him calmly and sternly as to a refractory child. His heart ached for the girl, whose miserable plight and courageous struggle to save the one being in the world dear to her was now sufficiently clear to him to exonerate her from all the odious imputations of his thoughts.

He went to her presently, and drew her gently into a corner seat farthest from Simonet.

"Don't worry any more about it," he said. "You have endured enough, and now that we have this fellow, all can be easily settled. I shall manage it for you."

"I want to tell you all," she replied, "because it will explain—a little, perhaps. There is—you don't know how bad I have been!"

"I don't care a fig what you have

done. Anything was excusable under such conditions."

She looked at him quickly. "Do you believe that in your heart?" she asked.

"Certainly I believe it."

"Even if I—even my treachery to you?"

"Anything and everything, my dear friend. What was I, a comparative stranger, when your brother's life was at stake?"

She caught her breath as if the words hurt her, and looking out of the window, said very low: "If only you had remained a stranger, if—you had not been so kind! This makes it all appear so black now—black as I never saw it before! . . . I have deceived you through and through, from the very first hour we met!"

Longstaff's face twitched as the significance of her words carried to his heart.

"It was all you could do," he said, remembering what he believed she had for the moment forgotten—their meeting in London, and wondering, in a passing thought, if she had known of the seriousness of her position then. "That is a matter of no importance in an affair of this sort; you were in a hard tangle, and had to catch at any straw."

"And it has proved a staff stronger than—" she broke off, too agitated to continue; then, with tears brimming in her eyes, she held out her hand, saying feelingly, "God bless you!"

As he pressed it between his, he felt its cold penetrate her glove, and knew it denoted the nervous reaction she was undergoing.

Far back in his mind irrelevant and unanswerable questions were stirring, like diabolical menace to his new happiness. Why had she not told him Barton was to meet her in Boulogne? Why had she desired to speak with the latter alone? That she should have availed herself of Barton's services in addition to his own, as extra enforcement in case someone should attempt to foil her plans, was excusable; but if, as she had insinuated, her acquaint-

ance with Barton was not of long duration, it was strange she should have the private understanding with him her behavior had suggested. It was hard to believe that a person of Barton's erratic nature could have proved himself more worthy of her confidence than he, with whom she had been so closely associated during these two days; and yet that she had some intimate understanding with him seemed beyond a doubt.

IX

THE thought was not pleasant, and he was glad to have her interrupt it.

"I must tell you more," she said, still watching the panorama of newly-green country through which they were flying, "so that you may understand the situation perfectly. It will be some satisfaction to me—later! You see, this Armour is also a sculptor, but of mediocre talent. He has always been jealous of my brother, who, as I have told you, is a genius, with all the faults of character pertaining to a genius. He is impulsive, intense in his feelings, passionate and reckless. When he had won every first prize offered for sculpture in Paris during two successive years Armour's jealousy took a new turn. He determined to get my brother into his power, and consequently encouraged the woman, Adelaide Fournet, to lure him into caring for her. . . . My brother and I are orphans; we have neither relatives nor money; but fortunately we were both given a good education, and an old friend of my father who has since died loaned us each two thousand dollars five years ago to start upon. Philip came to Paris, and in three years returned his loan and part of mine. I got a position on a magazine, which, with what I made by writing short stories, brought me enough to live on when my two thousand was exhausted. This magazine sent me over here to write an article on the Latin Quarter three years ago. I remained two weeks and it was then I saw Simonet, though

he did not know me. I was perfectly contented when I returned, and believed Philip to be happy, and he was, until meeting this woman two years ago. And even during that time, although his letters came less frequently, and were not so bright and hopeful as formerly, I never suspected he was in trouble until he cabled for me to come over. It took nearly every dollar I had to pay my passage, and on arriving I found him a physical wreck, in debt to the amount of several hundred francs to Armour, and a self-acknowledged murderer! You can imagine what it was to me to see my brother—little more than a boy—in such a condition. Oh, no, you can't even imagine it!"

"Yes, I can. I know how terrible it would be to have even a friend in such a predicament."

"You see, even aside from my love for him, there is his work—his extraordinary talent, which has already been appreciated so highly he has been called in the art world the modern Michelangelo. All was to be sacrificed to this vile man's jealousy, for he deliberately planned to ruin him. Even before the quarrel with Simonet Armour had induced my brother to give him two designs of great value he had made, and intended to execute in marble. These Armour took to reimburse himself for a debt of one thousand francs he paid a jeweler for things Philip had got for the Fournet woman; and he even induced my brother to help him put the designs into marble, although they were exhibited as Armour's work. For one of them he received a first prize, and sold it for more than ten times what he had paid the jeweler, and never offered Philip a centime! Think of it!

"My brother accomplished nothing during those two years, except one design—a wonderful thing that will make his name live forever, if he now can ever execute it. The idea came to him about six months ago, like an inspiration to lift him out of the mire these two had dragged him into. It revived his interest in his work, and while engaged on it he began to get

over his infatuation for Adelaide Fournet. Armour saw this and did everything to excite him to jealousy over her. He tempted him to play cards until he had got him again in his debt by paying, in the guise of a friend, what he lost to others. At last he incited Adelaide Fournet and that miserable creature there," indicating Simonet, "to pretend to be in love with each other; or rather, he made her lure Simonet into caring for her, while she appeared to reciprocate his devotion. His object then was to get my brother into the same state he was before, in order that he might inveigle him into resigning to him a clay model which Philip had made some time before—a beautiful thing, although, in a way, not quite so wonderful as his last, but which no one but Armour had seen, as Philip never showed his work to anyone else until completed.

"Well, one night at Armour's place, where he, Philip, Adelaide Fournet and Simonet, had been playing cards and drinking, that woman flirted openly with Simonet. My brother, who says he had drunk so much he was not accountable for what he did, flew into a temper and stabbed Simonet with a carving-knife. He fell, as Philip thought, dead, and then the woman and Armour pretended to play the part of friends. They took the body away, and loaned Philip enough money to get out of France. He was naturally in a dreadful condition of mind, and Adelaide, making him believe she did so from love and sympathy, accompanied him to London: Armour joined them there a week later, and told Philip his crime would never be betrayed if my brother would give him the work he was then engaged upon—his great design—and allow Armour to finish it and put his name to it. My brother refused, for his very life was centred in it, and although he was nearly crazed, he could not give it up. Armour threatened to expose him, and almost forced him to yield. I came just in time to prevent his doing so; for, terrible as the risks of his refusing were, I saw he would gain very little

by the sacrifice which would be almost equivalent to his losing his life, and not remove the crime from his conscience, or even secure him for all time against its being discovered. For how could he be sure someone else would not learn of it? Besides, as he had been goaded to frenzy, and had acted under the influence of drink, it seemed unjust his life should be wrecked, as it certainly would have been, had he been obliged to relinquish his masterpiece at that time. He would never have been able to do anything more; he was broken physically, and almost mentally. Oh, you can never know how shocked I was when I saw him first. When we parted he was but a boy, full of hope, aspirations and energy; I found him a crushed man, with the look and manners of a maniac. He seemed morally incapacitated, unable to decide anything for himself, utterly at the mercy of those wretches! When he told me all they had done I hated them—I could have killed them! I determined to thwart them at any cost other than his life, and together we planned to escape. Oh, the look that came to that poor boy's face when I told him I should manage it in some way, would have melted—"

She paused and pressed her hand to her eyes, and, filled with compassion as Longstaff was by the appalling story, he could think of nothing to say that might convey his sympathy. He waited, wondering if she were weeping, wondering at the fortitude and pluck with which she had braved difficulties that would have daunted a man hardened by experience.

When presently she let her hand fall to her lap there was no trace of tears in her eyes, only the dry brilliancy of subdued pain.

"The only thing we could do," she pursued calmly, "was to get away—to sail for America, and take what we could of his work with us—the clay model of his 'Battle of Amazons' and his last design. But the difficulty was we had no money—not more than twelve pounds between us, and part of that we already owed in London."

She paused, as though embarrassed, and looking down pulled at her gloves.

"Shocking!" muttered Longstaff, more to himself than to her. "It seems almost incredible that such a diabolical scheme could be attempted in these days. It sounds medieval. I can't understand how they managed it."

"Oh, they were clever, and we were fools! I see so many things now I was blind to then. They said they had shipped Simonet's body to a friend in the South of France, to whom they explained it was Adelaide Fournet's brother whose last request had been to be buried there. If I had not been nearly crazed, I should have understood how improbable it was they could do this without someone learning of it. But Philip told me with his own lips he had killed him, and, whatever they had done with the body, I knew that much was true, and that he was in danger of being arrested for murder on their evidence."

"But they would have been liable to arrest, too, for having endeavored to conceal the crime."

"We could give no absolute proof of that; besides, I could think of nothing but to get him away. He was on the verge of insanity, and I determined to save him at all hazards. . . . I got money, went to Paris, while Armour and the woman were with him in London, had his 'Battle of Amazons' and his last work prepared for shipping at a moment's notice, and moved to a place of safety. I then wrote him secretly to escape them on some subterfuge, and meet me in Cherbourg where I had wired for accommodations on the *St. Paul* sailing today. The day I met you I had a telegram from him saying he found it impossible to get away from them, and that he would come to Paris that evening, accompanied by Armour. He gave me a telephone address, and we communicated the next day by this means, as we did not want Armour to know I was in Paris. He told me he had agreed, under relentless pressure, to resign his work to Armour on condition that Adelaide Fournet should

remain in London. Although he hated her then, he was more afraid of her than of Armour, for she is much more clever; and, knowing I had had his work removed, he thought he might elude Armour, and get to Cherbourg from Paris. But Armour learned of our plan. Philip thinks he left my letter in London, and that Adelaide Fournet probably found it, and wired its contents to Armour. That night while Armour was asleep my brother escaped and the next morning telegraphed me where he was in hiding. I went out early to telephone him at the old address, as we had agreed, and did not get his telegram until I returned with you."

"Ah, I see; then it was to him you were telephoning when I came back from my hotel," said Longstaff, prompted by her confession to clear his own conscience.

"Yes; how—why do you ask?"

"Because I unintentionally overheard part of what you said, and because I thought you were addressing someone not related to you, I couldn't bring myself to tell you of it."

A quick flush overspread her face, but her eyes met his unfalteringly.

"You overheard what—how?" she asked, her voice betraying anxiety.

"I was in the hall; I could not help hearing. I should have warned you, I know, but astonishment prevented me. You had told me you had no friend in Paris. I understand now how contemptible my suspicion was, how unworthy all my doubts since have been. I owe you every apology."

She leaned back into the corner, and bowing her head on her hand uttered a hard little sound, like an abruptly checked and bitter laugh.

"You owe me nothing but contempt," she said. "That was but an insignificant fiber of the web I— Oh, don't try to be generous to me any more; I don't deserve it. I have been cruel to you, deliberately cruel and false."

"Don't say that; under such conditions there was no alternative but to adopt the weapons of those pitted against you."

"You were not against me; and yet it is to you I have——"

"We have less than a half-hour," he interrupted, both dreading it himself and wishing to spare her the trial of dwelling on the part she had played to him. "We should question this youth before we get in. It seems to me something must have gone wrong in Armour's plans, for surely he would not have entered upon a scheme of this sort without taking greater precautions against discovery."

She did not raise her head from her hand, where it was bowed in an attitude of absolute weariness.

"Will you question him?" she said faintly. "I haven't any more strength."

He arose and stood near her, pained by her evident exhaustion. "Will you take something?" he asked. "I have some good brandy in my bag; it might revive you a little."

"Thank you, no." She sat up with a show of returning courage, touching her hat nervously. "I am all right; I shall listen."

Longstaff, going to the other end of the compartment, seated himself opposite Simonet.

"Look here, my man," he began in a tone that foretold he would tolerate no nonsense, "I want you to understand that unless you tell me the absolute truth concerning this matter, I shall have no mercy on you; but if you do, you may depend upon me to protect you."

"What do you wish to know? I shall tell you anything—everything!" returned the other excitedly. "But I request you to remember only this—I was at their mercy, without money, and under the power of that man; I know not how, but he and she could do what they wished with me. Ah! it was as though they had hypnotized me! *Qui, monsieur, c'est la vérité!* They had me hypnotized! I could——"

"I don't care to hear about that! answer my questions truthfully. Where did Armour send you to from Paris?"

"To Marseilles, where a friend of his lives. I was to go under the name of

Jean Loubet, and to live there for two years. He gave me money to pay my way, and enough over to cover my expenses for one month. He was to send me one hundred and fifty francs each month for a year, and promised I should have four thousand francs at the end of the year from what he got for Howard's work, if I swore never to divulge my real identity, threatening to kill me if I ever did."

"Ah! . . . And why didn't you go to Marseilles?"

"Why? *Parbleu!*" he pressed his bony hands together and rolled his eyes back until only the whites showed. "*Je n'avais pas de chance, monsieur!* Ill-fortune dogs my steps! Armour was to accompany me to the station, but he received a despatch from Adelaide bidding him to go at once to London. His train left before the one I was to take, so he was obliged to let me go alone, although I was very weak, monsieur, from my wound, which is not yet quite healed. It is here, monsieur, here in my breast, a wound intended to kill me, although it did not. I live, monsieur, perhaps to accomplish the work I——"

"Go on; what happened? You went alone to the station?"

"In a closed cab, monsieur, for I could not walk, and besides I of course wished no one to see me who could inform Howard that I lived. But there was little danger at that hour, as the few who knew me were busy in their studios; therefore, finding I had scarcely time to catch the train, I did not trouble to disguise myself as Armour bade me; but I was careful, and got out of our quarter without being detected. Then, scarcely two blocks from the Gare de Lyon the horse of my cab fell. Ah, that accursed horse! All would have gone well but for that. I feared to lose my train, and taking off this large hat which Armour gave me among other things to conceal my identity, I looked out of the window to speak to the *cocher*. Then, monsieur, as though the devil had led him there, a man sprang toward me from among those gathered to watch the horse brought to his feet. It was

no other than Felix Garout, an artist, monsieur, to whom I owed two hundred francs for a picture I had sold for him some months before. I thought he was still in Italy, but, on the contrary, he had been in Paris a week hunting me. He threatened to give me over to the police then and there, unless I paid him the money. I pleaded; I told him he should have it in two days, hoping to escape. But he entered the cab, searched me, and took all the money I had. I was in despair, monsieur! I cried like a child, I implored him not to force me to remain in Paris to be killed. I told him some of my story—not all, not the names—and when he heard I was to get more money he devised a scheme by which he could deceive Armour. He has a brother in Marseilles to whom he wrote to claim all letters addressed *poste restante* to Jean Loubet, and to send a despatch to Armour announcing my arrival at Marseilles, as I had promised to do."

"Did you do all this from Paris?"

"No, monsieur, oh, no! Garout took me at once to his mother's place in Creil where I was to remain until I received more money from Armour; then I was to go off with him to some place, I know not where, with the understanding that I should divide with him what I got at the end of the year.

"He was very friendly, monsieur, and I was glad to be with him. Ah! the loneliness of going off to a strange part of the world, far from my beloved Paris! Paris! I thought I should never see it again! And now—oh, monsieur, I don't want to die yet; I wish to do some great work that will live after me; but if Armour sees me he will kill me, monsieur, *kill me!*"

"Oh, no, he won't! It isn't so easy to kill a man. Leave Armour to me; I shall manage him." Longstaff set his teeth on the last words, and there came a glitter to his eyes that told of his impatience to lay hands on the man whose very name stirred his bad blood.

"But I must not see him," whimpered Simonet. "You will not make that necessary?"

"I can't say, but if you do I shall be

with you, and if he does not agree to let you alone, he will be locked up."

"Ah, *Dieu!* His word—what is that? He will hunt me like a tiger when he knows you are not with me."

"I shall not leave you until you are safe—you may be sure of that. What more did you tell this man Garout? Does he know you were supposed to have been murdered?"

"Yes, but I gave him false names of all."

"Why did you do that?"

"Why?" He looked slyly into Longstaff's face, as if to make sure he was not laying a trap for him. "Was it not right to do so, monsieur?"

"Perfectly; but why did you do it?"

"Because I knew he might some day meet Armour or one of them, and use his knowledge to extort money which would put me—"

"Ah, I see," interrupted Longstaff, satisfied that he was telling the truth. The train was now drawing into the station, and he arose and approached Miss Thornton, who had been listening attentively. Simonet seized his coat.

"Save me!" he whined. "For the love of God, don't let me be seen! Garout is on this train! If he sees me—if anyone sees me—oh, what shall I do? I cannot—"

Longstaff threw his hand off.

"Can't you control yourself?" he said, suppressing harsher words because of her presence. "I tell you, you will not be seen!" Then to her:

"We had better wait here until the passengers pass through, don't you think?"

"Yes." She was arranging her veil, which, in the interest of following Simonet's story, she had forgotten.

Longstaff took the bags down, and stood by the window watching the crowd surge by, while the Frenchman, twisting in the farther corner like a frightened terrier expecting punishment, looked from one to the other apprehensively.

He shrank as though struck in the face when the door was suddenly thrown open by an official, who cried in an abusive tone, "Paris!"

"Send me a *facteur*," retorted Longstaff, and when the man came he detained him until the last of the throng had passed; then, bidding Simonet draw his hat down to conceal his face, he helped Miss Thornton to alight, and hurried them to a cab.

"Will you go to the Hôtel Nationale again?" he asked, when she and Simonet were safely in the vehicle.

"What I should prefer would be to go at once to 22 rue de Tournon to see my brother, if you think we might," she replied, somewhat diffidently. "He may do something reckless—may have already done something! I am so terribly anxious. Do you think we——?"

"Certainly! A good idea! He should know the truth at once; and we can take him with us to the hotel."

"*Mais non! non!*" exclaimed Simonet frantically. "You shall not take me there!"

Longstaff gave the address to the driver, and was about to get in, when the Frenchman sprang forward in a wild attempt to escape.

He caught him and thrust him back. "What the devil are you doing?" he demanded, for the first time losing his self-control. "I want no more of this nonsense, do you understand?"

"But you promised——"

"I promised nothing," he interrupted, getting in and pulling the door to sharply, "but that I'd see you were not injured; isn't that enough? You have money to start on, when Armour is settled, so you have nothing to worry about."

Simonet clasped his hands and sat back, looking with restlessly roving eyes into the street through which the vehicle now advanced at a good pace.

The shadow of lowering dusk already loomed darkly in doorways and corner recesses, and hung like blue vapor in the early foliage of trees that beautify the Avenue St. Denis into which they presently turned. A mysterious stillness seemed to reign above the intermittent rush of traffic, as though the silence of eternity brooded like an all-pervading spirit over the

stirring city. As they crossed the picturesque and historic Pont au Change, the river, still retaining a murky underglow of crimson, although the sunset radiance had almost entirely faded from the sky, wound like one fevered by Oriental suns, between familiar forms of haze-phantomized buildings, into a rosy veil of distance.

No one spoke during the drive, all appearing to be affected by the spell of the hour. Longstaff was conscious of a strange calm stealing over him, a feeling that all the perplexing elements in his relations with the girl at his side were forever dissipated. He was keenly sensible of her nearness, with a sensibility heightened to emotion each time the jolting of the cab brought her shoulder against his. Presently the cab drew up before a dingy, old-time building.

"Is this it?" she asked, as though awakening from a dream.

He muttered some involuntary reply, and opened the door.

"Shall I wait here for monsieur?" asked Simonet, hesitating to follow them from the vehicle.

Longstaff looked inquiringly at Miss Thornton. "Would you prefer to go in alone?" he asked.

"No, please come, and bring him."

They entered the wide porte-cochère, and she led the way up four flights of carpetless stairs to a landing where two tarnished yellow doors faced them. Before one of these she paused, and said in an undertone:

"Please keep him behind you, so he may not be seen," and gave the brass bell-knob a decided pull before Longstaff could do so.

There was no light in the hallway or on the stairs, and while waiting for a response from within they were visible to each other only as shadowy forms. For some moments nothing but Simonet's quick breathing broke the silence, then there was the sound of footsteps approaching slowly along an inner hall. The handle was wrenched, and the door opened to reveal Adelaide Fournet dimly out-

lined against a light thrown from the rear.

"*Qu'est-ce que c'est?*" she asked, peering curiously at them through the gloom. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am Miss Howard," replied the girl firmly, "and I wish to see my brother."

Before the words were quite uttered the reply came, "He is not here!" and the door was pushed rudely to. But Longstaff, protruding his foot, prevented its closing, and pressing against it, forced her back.

"He *is* here," he said, "and I demand that we be allowed to see him."

As he spoke he entered the apartment, dragging Simonet with him, and making way for her whom he now knew as Miss Howard, to follow them into a narrow, dimly lighted hall where the air was heavy with pipe smoke and an odor of greasy cooking.

X

"Who are you that you dare to force yourself in here?" demanded the woman, who, having come from a lighted room, was not yet able to distinguish faces.

"I am at present Miss Th—Howard's adviser," returned Longstaff, hesitating slightly over the name, "and I mean to see this business cleared up before I leave here tonight."

"Oh, you do! *Vraiment!* What business, may I ask?"

"This nasty plot you and Armour have planned to ruin Philip Howard. Do you see this boy? Look at him!"

He dragged the now limp Simonet into what light there was, and made him face her. She leaned close, then shrank with a suppressed cry in which a curse was hidden.

For an instant she appeared dumfounded, then, regaining her senses, called in a shrill, harsh voice: "Jacques! viens ici!"

Longstaff's nerves tingled. The thought came that he had possibly been too hasty in showing his hand, without taking precautions against

the danger of being overpowered by Armour and associates who might be with him. In that flash of time he felt in some way related to the girl who stood proudly fearless beside him, and the idea that he had rashly subjected her to peril which might prove serious drove him to resort to a lie for defense.

"You had better get Armour out of the way," he said. "I have a force below that will soon put him where he deserves to be."

"*Comment!*" exclaimed the woman in evident panic; "you—Jacques!"

She ran up the narrow hall to meet Armour, whose coatless form now loomed against the light of an open doorway at the farther end, his hair in slovenly disorder, and a lighted pipe in his mouth. They could hear her hurried whispering without distinguishing the words, and Armour's savage "*Nom d'un chien!*" as he backed before her into the room.

Longstaff, judging by this retreat that he was alone, seized Simonet's arm, and saying to Miss Howard, "Will you wait here a moment? I shall find out where your brother is, and be back immediately," started up the hall.

He was obliged to drag the trembling and gasping youth into the room, where he found Armour flattened against the wall, frightened and evidently at a loss what to do. Adelaide Fournet, now clearly visible in the tawdry finery of a filthy pink peignoir, embellished with an abundance of torn yellow lace and soiled ribbons, stood by him, apparently inciting him in tragic whispers either to make his escape or to meet the situation as her cunning dictated.

Longstaff gave them no chance to avoid him. "Listen to me," he said, addressing Armour, a stout, colorless man, whose flabby face gave evidence of a character too weak to be even successfully criminal. "You have been foiled in your base plot, of which I have sufficient evidence to have you locked up for many years, besides the——"

Adelaide Fournet interrupted him

with a piercing, hysterical laugh. "Oh, the devil!" she said; "what evidence have you—what proof?"

"This boy whom you have pretended was murdered by Howard."

"Ha! ha! Is that all?" she retorted defiantly. "No one knows of that but he and Philip, and our word would prove as good as theirs, *mon cher monsieur*, remember that! and besides, we have proof that he attempted to murder him. The intention is equal to the deed in the eyes of the law. You get out of here; we are not afraid of you!"

"No, we aren't, *par Dieu!*" cried Armour, infected by her daring. "You take yourself off, or I'll soon call the police!"

"How dare you come in here?" interjected the woman. "We'll settle you! We know the law!"

"*Allez vous en!*" continued Armour at the same time, and their voices mingled in a tirade of contumacious abuse intended to confuse and intimidate him.

Although taken aback by this unexpected opposition, Longstaff braced himself. "You call the police!" he said, looking straight into the Frenchman's eyes, where cowardice lurked beneath his momentary bravado. "They are within call, and if you don't, I shall. I have other proofs of this matter, and also of the fact that you accepted State prizes for work that was not yours."

Armour's face hardened; he glanced at his companion, then restlessly about the room.

"Pah!" sneered the woman, "that is a lie! Jacques Armour is not obliged to resort to any such trick!"

Longstaff, ignoring her, spoke simultaneously. "Look here, Armour, you know you are trapped; you are at my mercy, and I have neither time nor patience to waste on you. I want your answer now. Do you mean to capitulate, or do you mean to fight?"

"To fight!" shrieked the woman. "*Nom de Dieu!* there's your answer! Why should he capitulate? What has he to fear? We are as good as you are, let

me tell you. Who would believe the lies of a base Englishman, here in Paris? You do what——"

"*Taise-toi!*" interrupted Armour, who, nervously biting his thumb-nail, had watched her absent-mindedly as she ranted. "Let monsieur speak. I am ready to see things in the right light, and to——"

She seized his arm, screaming breathlessly, "What are you saying? What right light is there, but that he has insolently forced his way in here to insult you? Fool! listen to *me!* I know what I am doing; I know what he is!"

Longstaff wheeled about toward the door. "I have had enough of this," he said, "and shall take other means of settling the matter. Come, Simonet."

As he was about to leave the room Armour pushed Adelaide Fournet, who was speaking hurriedly in an undertone, out of his way, and stopped him.

"*Accourez, monsieur,*" he said excitedly. "I am ready to hear what you have to say. What is it you desire?"

"I want first to know where Philip Howard is, and to——"

"How do we know where he is?" screamed the woman. "Why do you come to us to seek——?"

Armour, whom her piercing voice had evidently begun to affect as it did Longstaff, stopped her with an oath. "*C'est assez!*" he growled. "Be silent, and let me arrange with monsieur!" Then to Longstaff, as she turned away with a gesture of disgust, "Monsieur Philip Howard is ill in the next room. He has been with fever for two days."

"*A mon Dieu!* You *imbécile!*" hissed the woman, and with a glare of contempt at Armour, she swept like the heroine of a cheap melodrama into the hall, where the loud banging of a door told she had entered a side room.

"Ah, he is?" said Longstaff. "Have you had a doctor to see him?"

"*Oui, monsieur,* this morning."

"What did he say? Has he a contagious disease?"

"No, monsieur, the doctor says he is suffering from nervous collapse."

"Then his sister may see him?"

"Certainly, monsieur, *sans doute*. He is somewhat better today, but raved in delirium nearly the whole of yesterday and last night—ah, what a night we had! Monsieur, we have tended him like a brother. I sat up—"

"Let him know his sister is here; I shall tell her."

As Longstaff went into the hall, Simonet, who had been cowering behind him trying to avoid Armour's savage glances, followed closely at his heels, and outside whispered, "May I not go now? They have seen me; is it not enough?"

"No, you'll remain here," replied Longstaff. "You are safer here with me, than outside, where he may track you."

When they returned, accompanied by Miss Howard, Armour appeared at the door of an adjoining room which he invited them to enter.

It was small, ill-furnished, and carpetless. An ill-smelling lamp, hooded by a fantastic green paper shade, stood on a table at one side, and threw a sickly light upon the occupant of a narrow iron bed at the farther end of the room.

Upon this Longstaff's eyes rested as did those of the others, and what he beheld caused him a strange sensation of awe.

Thrown back upon the pillow, framed by a mass of tossed auburn hair, lay a face so colorless and of such perfect molding it seemed like a carving in ivory. On the square, beautiful brow was the stamp of greatness, the manifestation of a gifted spirit, reflected in the great luminous eyes that were turned toward them. It was the head of a Lucifer, crowned with the diadem of heavenly favor, yet betraying in the finely curved and flexible lips a tendency toward human weakness and a lack of moral force.

His sister, without a glance at the room, hurried to him, and sank on her knees at his side, whispering his name,

and kissing repeatedly the large white hand he extended.

"Marian," he said softly, "my poor little girl, what sorrow I have brought upon you by my mad, weak nature! Oh, my darling, if I could—"

"There is no sorrow," she interrupted gently. "Philip, listen—can you bear something? Be calm, dear; I must tell you. You did not kill Simonet. He is living, and well; you only—"

"What! Good God! What are you saying? I saw him fall; I know—"

"Dear, don't!" She laid her hand on his shoulder as he sat up, gazing at her, his eyes wild with the haunting fear that had long preyed on his nerves. She put her arms about him, and drew his head to her shoulder. "Don't look like that, Phil; he is here, Simonet is here! It was all a lie!"

"Here!" He stared into her pale face, then, forcing her arms away, sank back. "Oh, can't even you be honest with me! You think to help me, but I am well enough to understand."

While he spoke Marian looked over her shoulder at Longstaff, who stood at the door, Armour and Simonet behind him.

"Send him here," she said, and he thrust Simonet into the room.

"We brought him with us, Philip," she added to her brother. "Look, he is here."

Howard leaned forward on his elbow, and stared at the miserable cowering form as at an apparition.

"Simonet!" he whispered. "Then you— Speak to me! Where—how—? Marian, am I mad! What does it mean?"

"It means, dear, that you have been foully deceived by Armour and that woman. Tell him, Simonet; speak!"

"What shall I say?" groaned the youth, looking back in terror at Armour.

"Tell him all that happened," said Marian. "Sit here on this chair, and tell him everything."

As he obeyed, Longstaff turned back into the other room, saying to Armour, whose presence he knew embarrassed

Simonet, "Now let us settle this matter."

"What are you going to do?" asked the Frenchman. "I know I am at your mercy, but, after all, it will not benefit any of you much to prosecute me."

"It would benefit the world to have such a creature as you put out of the way," returned the other. "But as I am not philanthropically inclined, the less I need soil my hands with you, the better, so I am willing not to betray your dirty secrets on two conditions."

"Ah! and they are, monsieur?"

"First, that you and that woman get out of this place tonight. Mr. Howard cannot be moved; his sister will wish to remain with him, and I shall stay in case she may need me."

"But this is my home, monsieur; where can we go?"

"That is indifferent to me; only get out of here."

Armour gnawed at his thumb-nail. "I have no money," he said morosely. "You ask a good deal, monsieur."

"I shall pay you a rent for the place, while we are obliged to remain here."

"How much, monsieur? We shall be put to extra expense if we go to a hotel; this is—"

"You can have a hundred francs in advance for two weeks. If he continues too ill to be moved after that, you will get more."

The Frenchman, who had been examining his fingers, while Longstaff spoke, licked one and rubbed it on his trousers to remove a stain near the knuckle.

"What is the second condition, monsieur?" he asked, after reflection.

"Do you agree to the first?"

"Yes, monsieur; I shall accept a hundred francs for two weeks' rent of the apartment, or any less time you are obliged to remain."

"That is generous of you!" sneeringly. "And you will go at once?"

"As soon as we can get ready, monsieur."

Longstaff, watching his blank and moody face, tried to read what thoughts were behind it, and concluded the man

was really too stupid to have even planned the scheme he had been foiled in without the cunning assistance of Adelaide Fournet.

"The second condition," he said slowly, "is that you agree never to molest Simonet in any way. The day I hear you have attempted to punish him for what he could not prevent, I shall expose you."

Armour, spreading out his hands, rattled off an incomprehensible flow of south France patois, ending with, "Ma foi! Why should I molest the miserable little hound? Pah! it would give me no satisfaction, monsieur."

"Then you agree to this also?"

"Yes, I agree; but monsieur, there is Howard's debt to me; which——"

Longstaff turned on him, sudden anger flushing his face. "His debt to you, chien! Don't talk to me of that! You owe him what you never can repay."

The man backed in servile fear.

"Pardon!" he muttered. "I did not mean to exact it, monsieur, but I am a poor man, and have advanced him lately more than three hundred francs."

Longstaff, so disgusted he could not longer look upon his obnoxious face, strode toward the centre of the room. The prospect of spending a week or so, even in such unattractive surroundings, with Marian, made him impatient to be rid of the man and his companion at any financial cost.

"Go and get ready," he said, "then come for your hundred francs. If you are both out of here in an hour, you will also get the money you advanced Howard, but not a centime of it will you ever see if you exceed that time."

When he had left him, Longstaff went to the window and looked down on the narrow street, black as an alleyway of ancient Rome, save where, at considerable distance apart, old-time gas lamps threw a faint glow of yellow light. Despite the unpleasant experience he had had in the place, his heart was buoyant with joyous anticipation of living in those bohemian quarters

with her near him—acting as her guardian, and the only friend she had to rely on. The whole situation, now rid of its troubling elements, presented an enticing promise of interest and novelty, and a smile played on his lips as he thought how ideally romantic had proved the adventure upon which he had set out with so many misgivings.

Armour and Adelaide Fournet passed, unheeded by him, in and out of the room, gathering their things together. The prospect of sweet days ahead absorbed him; he planned how he would make the place more attractive for her with flowers and other little touches of refinement. He would secure a servant to cook, and keep the rooms in order, and the marketing he would do himself, choosing such edibles as might appeal to Marian, little dainties and strengthening things for her brother, whom he would help her to nurse back to health. How close they would be, how near to each other!

Under the exhilarating influence of these fancies even his revulsion for Armour diminished, and he felt only a sense of relief and satisfaction when the Frenchman came to him to say he and Adelaide were ready to depart.

He accompanied them to the street, and had Marian's luggage and his carried into the house; then, entering the cab that had brought them, he drove to the best restaurant in the quarter. Here he ordered an appetizing little supper to be served hot in the apartment, and, providing himself with a bottle of fine old burgundy, returned, springing up the unlighted stairs as though there were wings to his heels.

XI

FOR twelve incomparable days they occupied the little *ménage* together—Marian, her brother and he; Simonet, who had been put up on a sofa for the night, having withdrawn to his own quarters the following morning.

To Longstaff the situation, so rich with joyous promise, was like having

passed at one step from black depths of hopelessness to the highest heaven. He was with her constantly; they breakfasted tête-à-tête in the sweet Spring mornings, at a little table set near an open window where he had placed a jardinière of growing flowers from which, as from a Summer garden, fragrance was carried to them by soft intermittent breezes that stirred the white curtains gently, like an inaudible accompaniment to their lowered voices.

During the first four days Philip's condition continued sufficiently serious to demand her constant attention, and her patient and tireless devotion to him made Longstaff appreciate, even more clearly than before, how much she had suffered through her love for him. She did not leave his bedside during those four nights, and only after much persuasion allowed Longstaff to relieve her each morning at five, when he insisted she should retire, and took every precaution to prevent her being disturbed before eleven.

The fourth night Philip slept without a break, and was so much better the following day that Longstaff prevailed upon Marian to leave him in charge of the maid, and go with him for a short drive. It was the first time she had been out since the night of their arrival; but every afternoon thereafter they either drove together, for an hour or so in the Bois, or walked under the sweet-scented magnolia and chestnut-trees, now flaunting their white blossoms in the gardens of the Champs Elysées. Sometimes, when the weather was not so fine, or too warm to tempt them to cross the river, they rambled like two curious children through the narrow streets of the Latin Quarter, peeping into old shops and places of traditional interest.

All the innate sweetness of her nature, formerly disguised, was now unconsciously revealed to him in kind and thoughtful impulses and instances of self-sacrifice that keyed his love to a point of adoration. She appeared much younger, and had en-

tirely lost a certain worldly poise and calculating self-restraint that had before fretted him. It was as though he had met her in domino and masked, and loved without seeing the being now made known to him.

But, as time passed, he was puzzled by a gradual lowering of her spirits, an increasing diffidence in her manner toward him, which was, in the circumstances, inexplicable. Occasionally in her gayest moods she would become abruptly depressed and thoughtful, and once, when he asked her why it was, she had looked away quickly, with a pained expression, saying, "Oh, please don't ask me, for I can never tell you."

This was the one troubling element in the Eden that had opened to him so unexpectedly, and like a swift weed, winding its poisonous way through a garden of flowers, once manifested, it grew with every hour more discernible and disturbing.

One unusually warm afternoon, when Philip was well enough to sit up by the window and read, Longstaff and she went up the river as far as St. Cloud, he having suggested their doing so in order to be refreshed after an oppressive day. Marian had declined at first, and only after his urgent pleading agreed to go on condition that they should return by the next boat. All day she had been preoccupied in thought, and seemed purposely to avoid being with him alone.

It was a primrose-colored afternoon; the sky spread pale yellow above, and the river reflected it.

Longstaff had determined before setting out to take this opportunity to speak to Marian of the future he dreamed of, and several times as the little steamer plied its way between the green banks of the Seine, he attempted to lead up to some appropriate starting-point. But, with seeming deliberateness, she balked him by immediately leading the conversation into abstract channels, and, on the return trip, launched into a steady flow of discourse upon objects of interest they passed, recounting historic anecdotes of the quaint old quais that give such distinc-

tive character to the river, pointing out where Rabelais died, and the sculptor Barye near the spot where once the old Convent des Célestins stood; and, as they passed under the Pont d'Arcole, recounted the story of its christening in blood during the attack on the Hôtel de Ville in 1830. With somewhat nervous volubility she seized upon every monument of historic significance that came in view, narrating interesting events and legends connected with them, which he had either forgotten or had never heard, and evincing a knowledge of French history in detail that surprised and charmed him. Indeed, she so cleverly diverted his thoughts that not until they had arrived at the apartment door did he realize he had lost the chance to speak to her on the matter nearest his heart. This was the more regrettable as she at once withdrew to her brother's room, and remained there until dinner was served, while he passed the hours pretending to read, but mentally planning how he would approach her during the meal, and dreading lest Philip might be sufficiently well to join them at table. The latter's now rapid improvement presaged the termination of their time together to be not far distant, and the prospect awoke in Longstaff a panic of impatience to come to a definite understanding with Marian.

But although they dined tête-à-tête once more, and as he knew, for the last time, for she told him her brother would be able to join them on the morrow, she gave him no opportunity to speak. In desperation he interrupted something she was saying, and which he did not hear, by remarking in a tone significantly suppressed, "I want to speak to you tonight, Marian, on a subject I may not have another chance—that I can't wait—"

"Not another chance?" Her eyes had widened with an expression of alarm, and the words that checked his came hurriedly and unconsidered. "Why not? Are you going away? There is plenty of— Did Philip call? I must go to him!"

As she pushed her chair back to rise,

Longstaff leaned over impetuously, laying his hand near her on the table. "He did not call; Marian, why won't you hear me?" he said appealingly. "Why do you always put me off like this?"

"Because you—I *can't*, I must go to him."

He arose as she did, impelled to stop her, and uttering an impetuous plea that was lost as the door closed behind her.

What the reason could be of her unwillingness to permit him to voice what he knew he had already betrayed to her in a thousand ways, he could not imagine. On several other occasions he had noticed how a tender tone in his voice or a glance revealing momentary emotion had affected her with nervous restlessness, and incited her either to leave him upon some pretense, or to abruptly change the drift of their conversation. This was the more incomprehensible as he had several times seen a look in her eyes that had made his pulses leap, an involuntary revelation of love she was for some reason fighting to subdue and conceal.

One morning when he thanked her for a little supper she had prepared and set in his room the night before, when he had been out late, she had flushed and replied at random a few confused and hurried words that had carried no verbal meaning to him, but a significance more gratifying than words could have conveyed.

This, and minor proofs that her feeling for him was far from antagonistic, he recalled as he sat brooding and mystified in the gloom alone. That something of a serious character was actuating her was indubitable. Only some former tie could explain it—her engagement to another, or—and he shuddered at the thought—perhaps she was already married! What did he know of her life, but the insignificant details she had told in connection with her brother's trouble? She might be married; there was no reason why she should have informed him of the fact in the beginning, and later it would have been difficult to— But why

should she conceal it? Why assume her maiden name?

All night he battled with the idea, alternately putting it away as illogical, and returning to it as the only reasonable explanation of her conduct, and ending by abusing himself for even considering it.

The next morning she did not come to breakfast with him, but sent a penciled line by the maid to say she had had a bad night, and felt so tired she would have coffee in her room.

"I should rather not see you until this afternoon," she had written. "If you will lunch out, and come for me at four I should like to go for a little drive, as there is something I want to say to you. Please do this, and don't be cross with me for asking it."

He went out and walked for hours, striding at a swift pace straight ahead, absorbed in a turmoil of baffling thoughts. What could it be she wished to speak to him of? What new development, or joy-brightening revelation was pending?

Her promise to drive with him invigorated his depressed spirits like a drug, despite the torment of futile conjecture. He would have her to himself for an hour or so, and in that would be happiness, whatever she had to communicate! . . . What could separate them now? Nothing!

After more than three hours of steady tramping, thinking in a circle, going over each incident of their association together, dissecting her every remembered intonation, he attained to nothing but a baffled sense of helplessness, a mental and physical weariness through which only one idea was distinctly present, and that—the prospect of driving with her!

Toward three o'clock, too tired to attempt the long distance back on foot, he hailed a cab and was driven to the Café de l'Opéra, where he proposed to get through the hour before he was to go for Marian, by lunching. But on coming in sight of the place, he was disagreeably startled to see Barton's familiar, lanky form issuing from the doorway accompanied by a woman.

Dreading to be seen by him, he called a counter order to the driver, who wheeled his vehicle in the opposite direction before Barton discovered him.

The strong antagonism Longstaff felt toward this man, with whom he had been for many years on intimate terms, made him realize that he secretly hated him for his unexplained friendliness with Marian; indeed, for the mere fact of his having known her under a false name.

While lunching he fretted over the recollection, venting upon it the chagrin brewing within him, and finding a certain relief in cursing Barton as being, in some undefined way, the cause of all his trouble. It was annoying to know he had returned to Paris, and so hateful was the thought of ever meeting him and having him refer to their trip to Boulogne, he determined to avoid him permanently, if possible, rather than risk the ordeal which would be insufferable even under more promising conditions.

At four he returned to rue de Tournon in somewhat brighter mood, and found Marian looking pale and worn, and evidently quite as depressed as she had been the day before. She appeared ill at ease with him, and responded to his efforts to draw her thoughts into brighter channels only by monosyllables. This so discouraged him after a time, that he became silent, deterred by her wan appearance from appealing to her for explanation. That her thoughts were preoccupied by some matter she was endeavoring to muster courage to communicate, was clear to him, and he waited apprehensively for her to speak.

When they had entered a less crowded avenue of the Bois where the stillness promised to facilitate speech, she glanced at him shyly, and said with a faint, uncertain smile: "I know I am horrid and—depressing, but I can't help it! You—I shall tell you what is troubling me. . . . It never occurred to me, until a few days ago, how unfair this situation is to you—how cruelly I have ignored you in pursuing my own selfish aims. I should

have considered; but I couldn't then; it was beyond my strength; you must understand—that!"

"Of course I do. But why should you think of me? It is you who have had the brunt of it all to bear."

"Oh, but—you don't know all I mean. Some day you will see, you will understand. You have thought only to help me. You don't know how unworthy I am; but I know, and it tortures me to feel I have——"

Her voice, tremulous from the first word, broke, and as she turned from him, he saw her lips quiver in a desperate effort to control herself.

"You are seeing things through dark glasses today," he said, trying to ignore the disheartening significance of what she had said. "It is only because you are run down by all this worry. When you have had a little rest and peace, everything will look brighter."

She did not reply at once, and her voice was surprisingly calm when she spoke, after some moments of reflection: "There is one thing I must speak to you of, although it is difficult, and you may resent it. You have incurred great expense for—my brother and me; you have virtually supported us for the past two weeks, besides——"

"Oh, that!" he interrupted, cut to the heart by her referring to a matter so antipathetic to the relation in which she stood to him morally. "Don't let us speak of that. What I have done was for my own pleasure."

During the brief silence that followed rash words mounted to his lips, words of appeal and love too confused to pronounce at once, and checked by her saying:

"Philip has asked me to speak to you of this—I must. He is a man—almost a stranger to you; naturally he feels the obligation—the——"

"Oh, don't, for God's sake, talk of obligation! If you knew how that word hurts me from you! Marian——"

"Listen! Don't let us speak personally. I am acting merely for him. He is too unnerved to speak to you about it. Please help me—please!" She spoke in desperate haste, and her

eyes, dark with excitement and pain, sought his imploringly.

He saw she was undergoing a bitter trial, and that to oppose her would only add to it.

"What does he want me to do?" he said dully. "Tell me; I am ready for—anything!"

She pressed her hands together, and looking straight ahead, said under her breath: "He wants you to accept one of his works—his 'Battle of Amazons.' Will you do this?"

Longstaff, feeling morally stunned, more by what he sensed under it than by the proposition itself, gazed mutely before him, knowing that the critical moment had come in which by one false move on his part all that made life sweet to him would be shattered. Patience and a little time might carry him over it, he thought. Her present mood was as incomprehensible to him as was the motive that made her wish to cancel what she had called their obligation to him in such a manner, which was evidently the only means they had of doing so.

Only the crunching of the vehicle's wheels, and the tingle of one little bell on the horse, broke the silence that seemed to enfold them like a veil through which they could sense nothing but each other's presence.

When Marian spoke again her voice penetrated her companion's mental vacancy with a dim sense of shock, for, although physically conscious of her nearness, he had felt for the moment spiritually separated from her.

"If you will come with me to Philip's studio tomorrow," she said, "I will show you the designs of his last two works. He wants you to choose; he has asked that you do this. Will you?"

"Certainly, if it will be any comfort to him or to you; why not?"

She looked at him furtively, and continued with increasing embarrassment: "I see you don't understand; you can't see it from our—his point of view. He only wants to show in some way his appreciation of your kindness. He knows as well as I do that he can never in any way repay what you have done

for him, and for—me; that it is beyond all possibility of—that it demands no repayment. But isn't it natural he should wish to show his gratitude in some way—the only way he can? Oh, why won't you speak? Why do you—?"

"Because I can't bear it," he said hoarsely. "You know why I have been his friend; you know it was for your sake, because I love you. How can I accept—?"

"Oh, don't! Don't say that!"

He caught her hand, as she raised it as though to defend herself. "I shall speak, and you must listen to me, Marian! You have put me off; you have—"

"I have trusted you," she said, scarcely above a whisper; "I trust you now. I beg you, I appeal to you as I never have before—don't say this to me today, I can't bear it, I can't listen! If you have any pity for me, believe this, and don't—don't ask me to explain today!"

"To explain!" he repeated dully, seeing in her blanched face an awful confirmation of what her words told him so indirectly, but unmistakably—the rejection of his love, the verification of his darkest forebodings.

There was no need to say more; she had given him his answer, and although unwilling to reveal the wound that had forced her to it, had betrayed its existence and trusted to his mercy not to probe for it.

Silent and pale as two who had experienced some shocking disaster, they drove back through the maze of gay equipages, hearing nothing and seeing nothing; closed into themselves, yet united in the throes of identical pain.

XII

THAT evening Philip, who, now quite recovered, had joined them at table, was the only one who attempted to converse during dinner.

Later, as they sat in the twilight, he spoke hesitatingly, but with heartfelt sincerity to Longstaff of the gift he

wished to make him, begging him humbly to accept it as merely a token of his esteem and gratitude.

"I shall be proud to have anything you have done," replied Longstaff, "but what you offer is too much. It is a masterpiece that should be sold to the nation; it would embarrass me to accept that. If, later, when you have time, you will make me some smaller thing I shall value it even more, knowing you did it for me."

Philip looked toward the window, saying slowly: "I may never be able to do such good work again—who knows? And I want you to have the best I am capable of. This is only in the clay now, but I shall make it in marble for you—this or the other, whichever you prefer. Marian will show you the designs tomorrow. Will you go with her to the studio and make—? Do me this favor merely in the name of friendship, for there is no other man in the world who could ever realize as you do my ideal of a friend."

Longstaff, too heavy at heart to appreciate fully the earnest depths of feeling in the other's voice, and too disconsolate to offer further opposition, agreed, with what graciousness he could, to do as he asked. Then fearing to be spoken to again, he abruptly rose and left the room.

When they heard the outer door close upon him Philip said sorrowfully: "Do you know, Marian, I think he resents my wishing to give him 'The Amazons'; perhaps he considers it bad taste. It may seem to him like an attempt to pay him for all he has done, and we never could do that."

"But we have explained; he must understand we are—what else can we do? . . . Oh, Philip, it is all so sad, and—terrible!"

As she bowed her face in her hands, he got up and put his arms about her.

"What is sad, dear? I don't see anything sad about it," he said, at a loss to understand her. "Everything is now beginning to look bright and promising."

"Oh, bright—and he—he! Philip,

he is suffering!" A sob, quickly suppressed, escaped her, and he felt her shoulders heave under his encircling arm.

"Don't do that," he whispered, drawing her close to him. "Marian, what is the trouble? I have seen for some days that you are worried over something you have not confided to me. Tell me, little girl; I have made you my confidante in everything—can't you trust your trouble to me?"

She turned her face against his breast, and clinging to him with both hands, said in a tone of passionate abandonment: "I love him, Philip, I love him! Oh, what am I to do!"

Her brother held her tight, laughing softly. "And do you suppose I did not know that, dear? But why be unhappy over it? He loves you, Marian, and he is the only man living who is worthy of you; the only one I would not be jealous of. It is ideal; you should be happy, not giving way to tears like this. He is only waiting for a chance to speak to you; if you weren't blinded by your own love, you would see that."

Marian drew slowly away from him. "Yes, he loves me," she whispered, as though to herself, "and I was indifferent to it too long—too long to save him!"

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? Can't you see?" She began pacing the room restlessly. "Do you suppose if I had realized what this was coming to, I should ever have let him associate with me as he has? Don't you understand what it means—the cruel reward he is to have for his kindness?"

"But if he loves you, and you care for him, why all this tragedy? My dear girl, you—"

She paused near him. "Do you think I could accept his love under such conditions as—with that thing between us? Don't you see how impossible it is?"

Her brother turned to the window, and stood looking out, with brows lowered, and an expression of pain about his compressed lips.

"I should have foreseen this," pur-

sued Marian; "I should have prevented it."

"I think he could forgive anything," murmured the other thoughtfully. "He doesn't look at things—"

"Forgive!" she interrupted. "Yes, he would forgive as he has forgiven! But am I to show him no mercy? God knows I have repaid his kindness cruelly enough, without attempting further to ruin his life."

"I don't see how it would ruin his life, Marian; that is nonsense. How could it hurt his life?"

"In every way; even if his love made him overlook it now, think of the future! What respect could he have for me, knowing—? No! it couldn't be. I must in some way end it now; I must— Oh, Philip, Philip, if I only have the strength!"

She sank on a sofa. Her brother pressed his hand to his brow and set his teeth. He took a step toward her, but suddenly paused, and then strode slowly to the farther end of the room and back, his head bowed in reflection.

"It is all my fault," he said presently. "I have brought this upon you, Marian. . . . Good God, I never thought of this!"

His sister stirred. "You!" she said dully. "No, it was I; no one is to blame but myself."

"I am to blame; if it were not for my folly—my madness, you could be happy now. Oh, I would give my life to undo it, to— But what is the use of words! Nothing can undo it!"

She arose and, going to him quickly, put her arms about his neck. "Dear, don't talk like that! It will be all right; I will arrange something. He—he will suffer for a little while, and then—it will be forgotten!"

"And you," he said, looking into her pale, upturned face, "can you forget?"

She hid it on his breast, saying faintly: "Oh, yes; yes, I, too, can forget. Time heals everything, Phil; and, after all, if it had not been for all this trouble, I should never have met him, you must remember that! It is something to have known him, to have— Come; let us sit over here, and talk of some-

thing else. This must be ended; it must be closed out of our lives with all the rest. There is so much promise in the future, dear; the present and the past must be forgotten. We have had a hard fight, and we have both been wounded, but true warriors don't brood over their wounds when the goal they have fought for is in sight. We are going to enter a new life full of glory and success—a beautiful day, Phil, when all this will seem like an ugly nightmare, that we need never think of again."

"If you would let me tell him, Marian," said her brother, as though pursuing his own thoughts, "I could explain, and he would understand. I know he would. Let me do it."

"No; don't speak of that any more, please! Even if he did understand it could not change the fact, which neither he nor I could forget. If it were between us alone, perhaps—but you know there are others who do, or will know of it soon. He might forgive me—he would forgive me, but I should never be willing to bring that stain on his name."

"And do you think it kinder to break his heart?"

"He will thank me later—when he knows."

"He may never know."

"He must! All will know before long. Even now they may know. But only he and Barton— Oh, that was my mistake—to let Barton go to Boulogne! I must have been mad!"

She threw herself back against the sofa, and covered her eyes.

"I don't quite understand why you wished either of them to go there," said Philip thoughtfully. "It seemed to me a bad move from the first."

"It was; but I was frantic at the time, I couldn't consider the consequences. When Oscar Longstaff recognized me I was panic-stricken. Everything was fresh in my mind! I was possessed with the cowardice of guilt, and when he appeared again, I felt tracked and cornered. . . . He was, I believed, the only one able to recognize me, and as he showed he ad-

mired me, and offered to serve me, I thought it would be safer to keep him by me until we were on the ship, in order that he might hear nothing he could trace to me. And when Barton came, and I learned they were friends, I was terrified for fear he might in some way communicate with Oscar, if I left him here in Paris where he could see the papers. I did not know how soon the matter would become known, until you told me I was safe for at least a month. I thought you and I would sail the next day, and of course never intended that he and Oscar should meet. I had it all planned."

"And I spoiled it, and brought all this new trouble upon you."

"It was fate," she returned softly. "We should never have known, perhaps, that Simonet lived if things had gone as I planned, so—let us be glad!" She tried to smile.

"I think if you would let me have a talk with Longstaff tomorrow, Marian," her brother said, so softly that his voice did not jar the longspell of silence, "I could explain this matter in a way that would so entirely exonerate you, it could not affect your future or his. I could tell him——"

She stopped him by laying her hand on his lips. "Please, Philip, don't attempt to do that!" she pleaded. "It would only make things worse than they are: it would break my heart! I am cowardly in this—I can't help it; I don't want him to know of it any sooner than he must. Dear, I ask you never to speak of it again, even to me."

Early the next morning Longstaff accompanied her to the studio, where the packers were to meet her at ten. Both were unusually suppressed, and betrayed the ravages of a sleepless night in their pallor and tired eyes. With their first glance, as they greeted each other at breakfast, they recognized what each suffered—he wondering and mystified; she stricken to the heart with compassion and self-reproach.

In the studio, close as they were, and intimately friendly as their relations had been, they felt estranged.

It was a typical sculptor's place—

large, well lighted, and devoid of all furnishing save such articles as were needed for work. Several plaster fragments, arms, legs and other portions of the human form, hung upon the walls and were crowded together in the corners. There were also a number of clay designs that appeared to have been abruptly forsaken, and one or two bits of finished marble. In all could be seen the conception of a genius mind and the touch of a master hand; and, untutored in such things as Longstaff was, he could not but recognize the power and originality embodied in even the unfinished studies to which Marian, with evident pride, called his attention.

As she carefully drew the sheet covering from an admirably executed group in clay, of several life-size figures in strenuous and realistic action, she said: "This is the first model he made for his 'Battle of Amazons.' In the second, which I had moved on first coming to Paris, he has added two more figures—splendid ones—and has strengthened the entire design so much you can scarcely get an idea of it from this."

"It is marvelous!" he returned. "I have never seen anything to compare with it in living force and beauty of grouping. Does he mean to——?"

As he broke off, Marian glanced up and found him staring in amazement at something behind her.

"What is that?" he asked in an awed whisper, indicating a full-sized head and torso in marble, that stood on a rough wooden pedestal to the right of the group, and had before been concealed by the curtain. It represented a conception of Psyche, original to a point of desecrating tradition, but wrought with such extraordinary power that its very incongruities were rendered beautiful. The bowed head wore a wreath of poppies mingled with thorns, and from the bare, rounded shoulders and half-exposed bosom hung a sleeveless bodice, richly ornamented, and weighing heavily upon cramped and broken wings, which were almost entirely concealed by it. In

the palm of one hand, raised and supported upon the palm of the other, lay a dead butterfly, and upon this the eyes, overflowing with tears, were bent in curiosity and sorrow. An anguish of soul appeared to breathe from the beautiful classic face, a sublime despair that seemed to imbue the marble with superhuman life—such despair as that he had seen in Marian's face in the train from Boulogne.

She flushed on seeing where his eyes were directed.

"That! Oh, it is one of his early ideas," she said, in confusion. "It is nothing of importance."

"It is beautiful, sublime! Marian, it is you! He took you as his model for it!"

She avoided his eyes as she replied hurriedly: "I don't know—yes, I believe he did, long ago. He made a drawing of it in America, before he had studied much. I did not know he had put it into marble until I came here to have his things packed. How strange he should have done it—now!" Her voice fell to a tone of soliloquy, and as she looked upon the statue her face was like a reflection of the marble face.

"Strange?" he repeated, sensing the promise of impulsive confidence in her thoughtful silence. "How do you mean?"

"I mean—do you know what it signifies? The death of soul, under the wear and artificiality of modern life. When he made the drawing I was but a child; my nature unembittered toward the world I knew nothing of; my soul unstained by so much as an unworthy thought. And now—now!"

She turned away, but he caught her hand and drew her back to him.

"Marian, speak to me," he whispered hoarsely. "Tell me what it is that is preying upon you. Trust me. Who can you trust in all the world, if not the one who loves you more than his life?"

Her face was very pale; she looked at him with an expression of startled incredulity as though he had told her that every secret of her inner life belonged to him through some indisputable right.

"You!" she said under her breath; then a swift change passed over her face, and with sudden abandonment she hid it on his breast. "You are the one of all others I cannot confide in!" she moaned, "the one I must deceive always—always!"

"No, you shall not!" He drew her yielding form closer. "I will know everything, Marian. Whatever it may be, let me know it, let me help you. Dear, a man doesn't love like this but once. It is my life—you are my life, and all that concerns you, good or bad—"

"No! no! What have I done?" She struggled to free herself. "Let me go! Please! This can't be; it is wrong! You—let me go; you will kill me!"

"Wait! Listen to me—Marian!"

He felt her quick breath on his face, the straining of her arms, the heaving of her breast, heard her repeated appeal drowning his own words, and then a loud knock at the door.

As they parted precipitantly three workmen entered laden with things needed for the packing. They stood hesitating, as though conscious of having intruded at an inopportune moment, until the foremost, taking the initiative, addressed Longstaff for orders. He referred him to Marian, and, going to a farther table, pretended to examine some drawings that lay upon it.

Marian gave the men hurried directions, and stood watching them a few moments as they prepared to carry them out. Twice she glanced at Longstaff, whose back was turned to her; then she slowly approached him.

"I shall be obliged to remain here some time," she said. "Perhaps you—it will be dull for you."

As she spoke she was busily rolling one of the drawings, her eyes lowered and hidden from him, her face almost rigidly expressionless from her effort to conceal what she suffered.

"Do you wish me to go?" he asked.

"Yes; I think it would be better, and—" She turned from him, for her lips quivered, and she knew she must

speak quickly, while she had the courage. "Please don't come back to dinner—not tonight; I can't bear it."

"And tomorrow, Marian, will you—?"

"Tomorrow! Yes—tomorrow: what?"

Her confusion, the desperate anxiety to be rid of him before she broke down that was evidenced by her looks and voice, made him forget his own pain in compassion for her. "I shall give you time, dear," he said gently. "Think it over, and if there is something you believe is sufficient to divide us, tell me of it, and let me judge, Marian; that is all I ask—will you do this?"

"I can't see you again today—not tonight; I can't!"

"No; I don't ask you to; but tomorrow—"

"You will come back late tonight: you will not try to see me?"

"Yes; I shall come back late," he replied dully, conscious of something ominously significant in her eager tone, that made him realize how much she feared the exigency of his love.

"Good-bye! . . . Don't speak to me," she whispered. "Go—please; good-bye!"

She stood motionless, like a thing of stone, when he had left her; hearing his steps retreating along the outer hall, down the long flights of wooden stairs until they were lost in distance.

Longstaff, his thoughts working in a futile effort to attain some definite point of understanding, wandered for hours through the narrow streets of that quarter of Paris endeared to him during the happiest period of his life. At six o'clock, physically exhausted and faint from having had practically nothing to sustain him since breakfast, he drove to one of the less popular restaurants and ordered dinner.

Having given his word not to return to the apartment until an hour when he could be sure Marian and her brother had retired, he wondered how he was to pass the evening which seemed to stretch into an eternity.

As he deliberated, Barton, the one person he least wished to see, entered the room, and approached him with

the swift step of prior intention, which left Longstaff no vaguest hope of escaping him.

"Hallo!" the new-comer exclaimed jovially, "I saw you from the window, old chap; by Jove, I have hunted for you tirelessly, and now suddenly I see you as though 'dropped from the zenith like a falling star'! Where the deuce have you hidden yourself?"

"I have been—traveling about," returned Longstaff coolly.

"Oh, you have!" Undeterred by the curt tone, that would have repulsed most men, Barton collapsed limply into a chair opposite him. "And how about the—how about Miss Thornton? Have you seen her again?"

"I accompanied her back to Paris. She is now with her brother, I believe."

"Oh, so! That's good. . . . By Jove, Longstaff, you could have knocked me down with a feather when I saw you in Boulogne. Dash it all! we both had our legs pulled, didn't we?"

Longstaff looked at him sternly. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"Mean! Why so huffy? I don't mean anything but that she played a jolly good joke on us, that's all."

His companion carefully knocked the ashes from his cigar. "Where did you meet Miss—Thornton?" he asked presently.

Barton, twisting himself grotesquely, sought his cigarette-case. "She came to our place to sound us about a manuscript," he said, after brief hesitation.

"Ah, she did?"

"Is that how you met her?"

"I have known her some time; her brother is a friend of mine."

"Oh—an artist, isn't he?"

"A sculptor," answered Longstaff.

"I mean a sculptor," returned the other, lightly tapping the end of his cigarette on the table. "What's in a name? He who is called a sculptor by any other—"

"Did you get Miss Thornton's manuscript?"

"No; she never sent it. . . . I say, Longstaff, don't be savage, but there seems to me something 'passing

'strange' in this affair—something 'rotten in the state of Denmark'!"

"In what affair?"

"Why, about Miss Thornton. I wanted to speak to you about it, because, by Jove! I can't believe anything against her, but you must own this is a strange coincidence! The day she came to our place, she said she wished to send eight pounds to a person in Liverpool who had the manuscript, and asked me to give her my cheque, drawn to bearer, for the amount."

In spite of his determination to betray nothing, Longstaff involuntarily caught his breath, for it was as though a knife had been driven into him. But he recovered himself instantly, saying easily: "Well, what of that? Did you give it to her?"

"No, I couldn't; you know I haven't a bank account, and the governor was out. I should have done it, if I could, even if she had not, as she did, offered me the amount in gold."

"When was this? Do you remember the date?"

"Oh, rather! It was the twentieth of May. I marked it as a red-letter day, for I assure you her coming was as though 'an angel had dropped from the clouds.'"

The other man's hand closed fiercely where it lay on the table, as he recalled that her visit to him was on the nineteenth of May. But although the significance contained in this fact morally stunned him for a moment, an impulse to defend her at all costs, and even against his reason, impelled him to hide what he felt.

"I don't see anything so strange in that," he said, studying the end of his cigar. "She probably wished to send the cheque by letter."

"Yes, she did; but the mystery of mysteries is that old George Morrison—you know, of Morrison & Planet—had something of the same experience. He was telling me of it the other day, and his description of the girl tallied exactly with Miss Thornton's appearance, except that she had light hair, he thought, and was rather stout."

Longstaff's cigar, the end of which he had bitten cleanly off in a fierce clenching of his teeth, fell to the table. He took it up quickly, and glanced at Barton who, he was relieved to see, was engaged in lighting his cigarette.

Once more he felt driven to lie for her, to lie recklessly, and he did.

"I'll be damned!" he said, to cover what perturbation the other may have noticed. "That same woman it must have been who came to me on the nineteenth of May, and I gave her my cheque, by Jove! What the deuce could she——?"

"She did! A light-haired young person?"

"Yes, rather stout. What an extraordinary coincidence that Miss Thornton should have needed the very same amount!"

"Wonderful, and most wonderful, wonderful!" murmured Barton thoughtfully, the cigarette he held limply between his lips moving up and down with the words. "What I can't understand is why Miss Thornton did not go to see you about her manuscript, since she knew you."

"I knew her very slightly before that. She did not know I was a publisher, I believe. At any rate, I met her again about that time, and she spoke of a manuscript she had just sent for, and asked me if I would look at it."

"Ah, then you have it! Is it any good? . . . Jove! Longstaff, you have lifted a load from my mind. It was terrible to think that such a being as she could be guilty——"

"Guilty! What the devil are you talking about? What could she be guilty of? I think you're mad."

Barton folded his long arms, and leaning forward on the table let his melancholy eyes wander over it as though in search of something.

"I know," he said, "of course it sounds mad, but it was jolly strange, you know. Morrison was dreadfully excited when he heard I had had a visit——"

"Do you mean to say you told him of Miss Thornton's request in connection with that story of the other

woman!" interrupted Longstaff angrily.

"I didn't mention her name, of course. He thinks it was the same woman."

"Did you describe her to him?"

"No; I merely asked him to describe the one who had gone to him, and as it was evidently a person of different appearance, I clung to the straw of doubt, and let him talk. His idea is that the woman is an insignificant aspirant toward literary fame, from somewhere in the provinces, who wished to have one or two cheques from well-known London publishers so that she could impose upon her friends."

"Yes," returned Longstaff, his face clearing a little, "that is a very probable solution, and innocent enough, after all, since she paid down the value of what she got."

"Of course, but why, I wonder, did she not have it made out in her own name?"

"Possibly wished to do as she said—pay off a debt and give the impression she had sold her work in London."

"But didn't she ask you for the same amount, eight pounds?"

"I don't remember; no, she certainly could not have done that. I think it was twelve; but what does it matter? Poor wretch, she probably never got a publisher's cheque legitimately, and, so far as I'm concerned, she is welcome to what satisfaction the one she bought from me can give her! . . . How long are you here for?"

Barton drew a deep breath, and sat back. "Returning to London tomorrow. Gad! I do dread it. I hate the beastly hole; never did like it. I'd like to go a hundred thousand leagues away from England."

"I thought you had decided to join your brother in India this Fall," said Longstaff, also breathing deep at having got rid of the other subject.

"To India! I fancy that will remain merely an idle dream to the end of my days."

"But you told me some time ago your uncle had agreed to send you."

"Oh, he did say something about it, but although his words are 'smoother

than butter,' he balks when it comes to dealing out lucre!"

Longstaff made no reply; an idea had come to him upon which his thoughts became centred, an idea which presented a possibility of being rid of this man, and his knowledge concerning Marian, perhaps for life.

"I should think he would consider your health," he said, after a pause; "that existence in London isn't suited to you."

"Oh, he considers it enough, by Jove! He throws my feebleness up at me on every occasion. In his opinion I'm a worthless clod, yet he'll keep me there, 'to die in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole'!"

During another interval of silence Barton's thin fingers beat a noiseless tattoo on the table, while his eyes, heated by an underglow of anger, roamed aimlessly about the room.

Longstaff was the first to speak. "If it were only a matter of money," he said, "that could easily be arranged."

"Easily arranged! I'd like to know how? The road to righteousness couldn't prove more difficult."

"But if you had it, would you go?"

"Go! To India, the apex of my highest aspirations? I'd go like a swift-winged arrow of light."

"Your uncle would let you?"

"He couldn't stop me; besides, I fancy he'd be glad to be relieved of the prospect of having me die on his hands. But where is the use of thinking of it? There is as little chance——"

"If you like, I can let you have two thousand pounds easily," said Longstaff, too impatient to get the matter settled to allow him to finish his complaint. "You can give it back, if you like, when you've made a fortune out there, or when you find it convenient."

Barton, his eyes stretched like those of a frightened deer, blurted breathlessly: "Oh, I say! You— Oh, no, old chap, I couldn't let you do that! It would——"

"Why not? What rot! I have much more than I know what to do with. You will be doing me a favor;

I mean to say, it would be a pleasure to me to do it."

Barton squirmed and, winding his long legs about his chair, felt nervously again for his cigarettes.

"It's deuced good of you," he said confusedly. "By Jove! I say, how did we get on this subject? I have been thinking of India all day. It's the strangest— By Jove! . . . 'What mighty contests rise from trivial things,' eh?"

Still in a contorted attitude, he put a cigarette between his lips and let it hang unlighted while, with brows comically raised, he stared into vacancy.

Longstaff, watching him, and comprehending the struggle he was undergoing, wondered whether or not to make the proposition serve him also in another direction. To suggest openly that the offer he had made should buy Barton's silence concerning what he knew of Marian was distasteful to him, and seemed unworthy of his love for her, jarred though it had been in that hour of hideous revelation. However, the temptation was great to prevent Barton from spreading the story of their meeting, and other details which might later prove of dire disadvantage not only to her, but to all concerned.

"Well, do you accept?" he asked, after pursuing these thoughts for some moments.

"Accept! It's like having heaven open suddenly upon me!"

"All right; good! You let me know when you want it. When would you go?"

"I suppose in September; but, I say, it's such a lot, you know, and I may never be able to return it."

"Well, and if you don't, what odds? It will be the most gratifying expenditure I've made since I woke up to find myself undeservedly rich. Come, let's go to some show; I'm tired of this place."

Barton, still appearing dazed, arose slowly and followed him to the street where Longstaff hailed a cab, and directed the *cocher* to take them to the Variétés.

On the way there he said: "Look

here, Barton, did you say anything to Morrison, or anyone, about your trip to Boulogne?"

"Not a word: I promised Miss Thornton I would not. I have never mentioned her name, nor a word concerning that affair, to a soul."

"I'm glad of that, and you will do me a favor if you never do speak of it, as it would only start talk in our circles about me that would probably be exaggerated into something sensational. . . . The truth of it is, Miss Thornton's brother was in trouble, and needed a friend. I bought one of his works, so now he is all right and the entire matter can be dropped."

"You may depend on me, old chap. I'll be as 'silent as the moon.' "

"It is merely that I don't care to have Blackwell gibe me about my trip over here," returned Longstaff. "And besides, it would be unpleasant for Miss Thornton and her brother to have the affair get out, and be contorted into something serious, as it probably would be."

"Of course; you're right. Poor girl, she *was* in a funk! I don't know the particulars, but anyone could see she was under a strain. You're a good fellow, Longstaff. Jove! 'friendship, mysterious cement of the soul,' how seldom one finds in these days such a friend as you are! You've probably saved that fellow, and now you have made me feel I am 'the very button on Fortune's cap'!"

XIII

WHEN Longstaff returned to the apartment toward two o'clock, he found it all in darkness, and silent with a strange, dead stillness, that went to his heart. He had only twice before remained out late at night, and on both occasions had found a lamp burning in the hall, and in his room a little cold supper daintily prepared by Marian. Tonight there was neither light nor supper, and as he tiptoed through the dark and closed his door with care to make no noise, he was oppressed by a

feeling of desolation and evil foreboding that caused his restless sleep to be haunted by ugly dreams.

From one of these he awoke in the morning chilled with terror, although the dream had left no definite impression on his mind. On looking at his watch, he found it was not yet seven, but he heard the maid banging things noisily about in the kitchen, and became hypersensitive to every sound she made lest it should awake Marian.

He got up, put on his slippers and bath-robe, and crept silently to the kitchen door. The woman was busy scouring a copper pot, and as he remonstrated with her in a whisper, she regarded him in half-resentful astonishment.

"But mademoiselle is not here, monsieur," she said, "and I did not know that you had returned."

"Not here! What do you mean?" he demanded, feeling his blood run cold with sudden, appalling dread of what she had to tell him.

"She has not yet returned, monsieur."

"Returned—from where?" The words came hoarsely in a voice unfamiliar to himself, and he waited with breath held back for her reply.

"*Je ne sais rien, monsieur!*" she returned fretfully, raising her shoulders and spreading out a pair of wet and grimy hands. "How can I tell you that? Yesterday at midday, she told me I was free to go for the day, as she and her brother were to dine out, and would have a cold luncheon. So of course I went, monsieur, and returned only this morning."

Longstaff, feeling as though a cold hand had closed on his heart, stood gazing blankly through her, his face blanched to an ashy pallor.

The woman looked at him with rapidly growing interest. "Did monsieur not know?" she asked. "I thought surely monsieur was with mademoiselle and her brother."

"Oh, yes, of course," he returned quietly. "Bring the water for my bath, please, and coffee in an hour."

He walked back to the door of his

room and paused, feeling the emptiness of the apartments beyond affecting him like an impalpable menace. Curiosity, mingled with an unreasoning hope that the maid might be mistaken about their not having returned, as she had been in his case, tempted him to go up the hallway to Marian's room. The door was wide open, and he stood at the threshold, gazing upon its vacancy as though within those four walls were encompassed the desolation of his whole future life.

The bed had not been slept in, nothing suggestive of her was visible, and in its perfect order the room appeared to have been long unoccupied, presenting the impersonal and uninviting stiffness of a hotel bed-chamber. Every bit of furniture stood out with distinct but unfamiliar realness to his sight, making the idea that Marian had ever inhabited the place seem but an unsubstantial fancy.

Suddenly his eyes fell upon a white patch on the table that sent a thrill of reanimating warmth through his chilled blood. He took the letter quickly, and carried it to his room. This at least would prove the realness of what he suffered, and relieve the unanswered silence that threatened him with frenzy.

Sitting huddled in a heap on his bed, he tore the envelope open, and read its contents first swiftly, then again more slowly:

You will despise me, Oscar, when you find this, despise me as I know I deserve, and as you would later even if I did not take this step which, contemptible as it is, even you will see before long was the only thing I could do. That it will cause you sorrow for a time, and reward all your generosity and kindness by perhaps destroying forever your faith in humanity, is not the only bitterness it contains for me, though in this thought I suffer much more than you can ever know. And yet my greatest wrong to you was unintentional. Try to remember this when you judge me, and try to consider the forces that impelled me to act as I have, indifferent to the consequences both to you and to myself. By the time you receive this we shall be on our way across the ocean, which is best for us both, even at this late time, although I had hoped it could have been long ago. Our ship sails tomorrow at eight, and, bitter as it is to me, it seems wiser you should not know where we go.

Once I told you a woman must pay with her heart's blood the price of folly perpetrated by one she loves; now I am paying that price and must always pay it.

Good-bye, and God bless you.

MARIAN.

Not until reading it the second time did he notice the hurried and unsteady writing, the blurs and scratched-out words, the tremulous penning of the last line. In the first reading he had comprehended only the cruelly salient fact that she was gone. She had deliberately and pitilessly broken off all possible connection with him; left him in a full knowledge of his love, to eat his heart out, to die or do what he would, which in the impotent madness of his sorrow was to seek annihilation by any means, to deaden forever his consciousness of pain.

In a frenzy of despair and rage he crushed the letter in his hot hand, muttering savage, disjointed words without meaning. For some twenty minutes he sat there, looking like a mere boy crushed by his first real sorrow, his fine sunburnt throat bared, his fair hair tossed.

The maid, coming with his hot water, roused him.

Two days later, having satisfactorily settled his affairs in Paris, and closed what had been the sweetest and saddest chapter of his life, he returned to London. On the train from Dover he was looking indifferently through a morning paper, when the following headlines attracted his attention:

"CLEVER FRAUD PERPETRATED BY A YOUNG WOMAN ON TWO LONDON PUBLISHERS AND A BANKER."

He read the rather sardonic account that followed with breathless interest and dread. The writer evidently saw something humorous in the affair, and treated it with satirical levity that made his overwrought nerves ache, for to him it was like witnessing a surgeon dissect, with pitiless laughter, the heart of her whose secret it revealed in all its ugliness and all its beauty. Only the names of two of those de-

frauded were given, but it was positively stated that two well-known publishers and one banker had given their cheques for eight pounds to an unknown young woman, who had paid the amount for them in gold, and the cheques had been indiscernibly altered to call for eighty pounds each. The writer pointed out with undisguised relish how easily the change had been made, and how eight was the only figure that could be so cleverly altered, as it necessitated merely the addition of a "y" and a cipher. But, as two intended victims acknowledged having sold their cheques and found themselves eight pounds to the good on investigating their bank accounts, after the first alarm a few days before, it was evident the scheme had not proved invariably successful. However, it was banteringly argued, since the fair conspirator had gained something like two hundred and nineteen pounds on what she had risked, and perhaps more from others who would not confess having been duped, she should not complain, especially as there was very little likelihood she would ever be held to account for having cheated some of the cleverest men in England. Most of these would have remained in ignorance of the fraud until the end of the year, had not the story of the mysterious visitor become circulated among friends, as was stated in a former issue of the paper. But even as it was, she had had more than enough time to make good her escape, and as the victims were all men of means, it was probable they would consider the lesson they had learned well worth the seventy-two pounds lost, and not throw other money after it in a vain effort to trace her.

Despite the horror with which he read to the last word, the courageous daring and unselfish object of her deed to his mind eclipsed its criminality. He saw her frantic as a mother over her one child, risking everything, as she had said she had, to save not only the brother she loved, but a man of world value who had, in the very dawning of his success, fallen a victim morally and physically to the unscrupulous designs

of those he trusted and looked upon as friends.

As he brooded upon it, he felt that in her place he, too, would have scorned the relentless despotism of conventional principle, and, facing equally insurmountable difficulties, with the life of such a man as Philip Howard at stake, would perhaps have stooped to a crime less redeemed by pluck and self-risk, which, in one of her years and experience, was almost sublimely audacious.

And yet it was for this she had left him! Overwhelmed by her consciousness of guilt into which she had plunged under the galling spur of desperation, a guilt to which she had given no thought, until suddenly awakened to it by the coming of an unforeseen element, she had rejected his love, and suppressed her own so unconsciously revealed to him! He understood it all then, as though she had clearly set it forth in her letter of farewell, and his heart yearned over her as over a child that had died in his arms, with the first look of recognition and love in its eyes.

He pondered in tender memory, now devoid of resentment, over the hours they had passed together, over the joy that had vanished as his hand was on it, like a pricked bubble. That it was lost forever he knew, ended as some sublime symphony ending abruptly under the dying fingers of its creator—a mere fragment of perfect happiness, a memory to haunt the years that must be lived without hope, and devoid of interest.

The next day he went to his office, determined to bury himself in work. In a few months the memory of his bitter experience would surely fade, and in a year he could look back upon the time perhaps as nothing more than an interesting experience.

Yet, as is the diabolical way of fate, there awaited him at the office a new stimulus to his passion—a letter from Philip Howard, evidently sent by pilot from the steamer *St. Paul*, and a wooden box of considerable size forwarded from Paris, and addressed to him in large painted characters.

The letter was not long, but expressed in a few impulsively sincere words his

gratitude for all Longstaff had done for him, and a plea that he would accept, merely as a tribute of friendship and appreciation, the head of Psyche which his sister had told him he had admired. The "Battle of Amazons" he intended to do in marble as soon as he was settled, and would ship it to Longstaff immediately after it had been exhibited, which would probably be some time the following Spring.

There was no other mention of his sister, and no clue as to what part of the United States they were bound for.

He had the statue taken to his rooms, and there, set upon a pedestal of solid ebony, it held dominion over his many hours of solitude. For one year his only joy was to sit before it, and relive in fancy those days of false happiness, and dream dreams abruptly ended as his lips touched the marble hand wherein lay the emblem of a dead soul.

Blackwell, his partner in business, comprehended at once that something of a serious nature was preying upon him. He made no attempt to investigate what it might be, but as, after many months, Longstaff's health showed gradual decline, he thought of a plan to get him away, with the hope that decided change of environment might pull him out of his trouble, whatever it was.

There had arisen a business controversy between them and a New York publishing house that called for personal management on the other side, and he proposed that Longstaff should go to settle the matter.

The suggestion was enticing, and fired the younger man with a wild impulse to obey. But, on consideration, he saw the folly of the false hope it awoke, and the unfairness to her. She had cut herself off from him despite what it cost her; she had shown him that only by burying the past could she have strength to meet the future, and she had done it with courage that put to shame his selfish impulse to pursue her. Never could she welcome him with that barrier between them, and for him to

attempt to prove to her how unsubstantial it was in his sight would not only be futile, but perhaps make her despise him for inflicting upon her additional pain and humiliation. Only a sign from her could give him the right to cross the gulf dividing them, or make even the slightest move to enter her life again. He refused positively to undertake the mission, and time dragged on while the matter was leisurely treated by letter, without being brought to settlement.

Fourteen months had elapsed since his parting with Marian, when Longstaff, who was constantly on the lookout for some notice of Howard's works in the magazines and papers, saw an enthusiastic article in the Paris *Herald* exalting him as the most promising sculptor of the day, and giving reproductions from photographs of his two latest achievements. One was the work Armour had attempted to wrest from him, and which was then on exhibition in Paris, and the other the "Battle of Amazons," which, the article stated, had been sold to the United States Government for fifteen thousand dollars. A brief sketch of the young sculptor's life was given, with no details of particular interest to Longstaff, save one—the address of his studio in Boston. This he noted in his pocketbook, wondering why he did it, when beneath the sincere gratification he felt in learning of the young fellow's success, there was a pang of disappointment gnawing at his heart, a cynical recollection of the promise they had both made that he should have the "Battle of Amazons." It was not that he wanted it; indeed, knowing their financial condition, he would have been embarrassed to accept it; but it was the fact that the promise had been forgotten that hurt, suggesting as it did that all thought of him, and their association together, had been ruthlessly discarded from their memory. He tried to find comfort in the argument that Marian, perhaps realizing that he would value it more, had had the "Psyche" sent to him in place of the "Amazons," or had later looked upon it as sufficient fulfilment

of her promise without obliging her brother to relinquish a masterpiece he had an opportunity to sell at a time when he needed funds.

But notwithstanding his endeavor to find excuse, the unpleasant impression remained to add another drop of gall to his already full cup, by reviving an underlying feeling of distrust which he had not known since their trip to Boulogne. There was something revolting to his sense of integrity in the fact that Howard had not written him of his intention to sell the statue; that both he and his sister had ignored him completely in the matter, and had allowed a little over a year of time to efface him from their memory. The idea preyed upon him for days with increasing ugliness until it began to poison his memories, and even to mar in some indefinable manner the beauty of the "Psyche." He came to fancy he detected a suspicion of worldly cunning in the pure, sorrowful face, which so destroyed his pleasure in looking upon it, that he was obliged to cover it over with a white cloth through which the outlines of head and hands were revealed with the cold rigidity of a sheet-covered corpse, and seemed to infect the atmosphere of his chambers with the stillness that pervades the presence of death.

Was she indeed dead to him? he thought, as he passed it one morning on his way out. Must even his memory of her be buried as a thing tainted with corruption?

He felt ill; his feet lagged heavily, and his mind, dulled as by an impenetrable cloud, brooded inertly upon this one thought.

Blackwell, looking up as he entered the office, saw in his haggard face that some new crisis had come upon him, and an expression of sympathetic anxiety crossed his own countenance.

They exchanged their usual morning salutations, and Longstaff, seating himself at his desk, languidly opened the first of a pile of letters awaiting him. The elder man watched him surreptitiously a few moments over the top of

his glasses, then ventured, in a kindly, solicitous tone:

"I say, Longstaff, I want to speak to you as a father, my boy. I was your father's friend, and am your friend. It worries me to see you like this. Something is troubling you; I have seen it for a long time. You look a wreck!"

Longstaff threw down the business letter he had been trying to read.

"Oh, for God's sake!" he said fretfully, "don't exaggerate things. I can't help how I look. Had a bad night; everyone is subject to that at times, and likely to show it."

"Certainly; but, my dear fellow, you are going from bad to worse. I don't wish to investigate into your troubles, but if you go on like this there will come a break you may not be able to recover from. You should get away; that is the best tonic—change of scene! If you will not go to the States, run down to Nice for a week or two. You will find good weather there. London at this season is depressing enough for a well man—it is impossible for one in your condition."

Longstaff was opening a letter bearing an Indian postmark—the fifth he had received from Barton since his departure more than a year before. "Oh, I don't mind the weather," he returned more graciously, as he spread out the erratically written page; "it's all one to me whether it rains or shines."

"I dare say; but you need change and I'm not willing to see you go on like this. As your father's friend, I feel it my duty——"

"Oh, all right! I know what you want to say. I'll go—some place; only let the matter drop now."

"When will you go?"

"When you like." He pushed the letter aside, and ran his fingers nervously through his hair.

"Then, on Saturday?"

"Yes. . . . What about that contract with Hallowell? Has he agreed to it?"

"Yes; the papers are there on your desk."

Longstaff took them up and tried to read, but his thoughts drifted, and fearing the other would notice it, he settled back in his chair and began again, with brows knitted in an effort to concentrate his attention.

Only the slow, dull throbbing of a large clock and the rumble of traffic outside broke the silence, while both men appeared absorbed in what they were doing, seeming to have forgotten each other's presence. After perusing the papers he had in hand, Longstaff arose and crossed the room.

"There's a box for you in the other room," said Blackwell indifferently, as he bent to open one of the lower drawers of his desk; "did they tell you?"

The other paused, his breath caught by an intuitive flash of thought.

"No," he replied; "what sort of a box?"

"A wooden case. It came from the States."

"Ah!" Without considering how his haste might impress Blackwell, he hurried to the next room, and, calling for one of the workmen, had the top partly lifted from a large packing-case that had been sent by express from Boston. Within it, carefully propped and padded, was a beautiful copy in marble of the "Battle of Amazons," finely finished and of original size.

On beholding it he covered his eyes with his hand, shaken to the core of his being by a reaction of feeling so fierce and overwhelming he feared the man might detect it.

"Shall I open it all, sir?" asked the latter.

"No, that will do. Nail it up again, please, and have it taken carefully, in one of our wagons, to my chambers at once."

He waited while the boards were replaced, more to get himself under control before returning to Blackwell, than to see that it was properly done. To go back to the irksome duties of his desk was impossible, when his heart seemed bursting with remorse and a wild happiness he scarcely understood. Feeling he must get off somewhere by

himself, he returned to the inner room for his hat and coat.

"I'm going out for a bit," he said to Blackwell, who was hidden behind a newspaper. "I'll be back after luncheon to attend to that Hallowell business, and the rest. There is nothing very urgent, is there?"

The elder man glanced up critically. "No, nothing," he replied. "You'd better take the day off, my boy; you don't look fit. I shall attend—"

"Oh, I'm fit enough; I want some exercise, that's all. I shall return at three or thereabouts."

As he shuffled into his coat, Blackwell remarked quite innocently: "That's a deuced queer business about that cheque fraud, isn't it? That it was perpetrated by a Frenchwoman doesn't surprise me; but, my word! I didn't think there was so much honesty in the whole of France."

Longstaff, absorbed in his own thoughts, scarcely heeded what he said, but the words returned when he had got out in the open air, penetrating the chaotic confusion of his brain like a flash of vivid light thrown on darkness, suggesting that some new development concerning Marian's stratagem had been made public. Impatient to learn what it might be, he hailed a cab and was driven to his club, where he knew he would find all the morning papers.

His hands shook as he opened one and searched the columns, dreading lest her identity had become known, and fearing to see the name he loved blazoned forth in a sensational exposure of her crime. Then, in the full flush of his restored faith in her, he felt he neither could nor would survive such a blow, and like one prepared to read his death-sentence, he followed swiftly the printed lines of the article he sought. It was not so long, nor written in so sarcastic a vein as had been the announcement of the fraud, but betrayed rather a somewhat grudging undertone of admiration. The facts were given with evident aim not to encroach too much upon space needed for more important or sensational matters, but also with a fair appreciation of the subject's

interest from a psychological point of view.

The gist of it was that on the morning of the preceding day every man who, some fifteen months back, had been defrauded by having had cheques they had sold for eight pounds altered by an unknown woman to call for eighty, had received a draft, issued by a Parisian bank, for the amount of seventy-two pounds each. These drafts were respectively enclosed in a sheet of paper on which was typewritten in French:

"The sender begs you to accept the enclosed draft in payment for the amount fraudulently borrowed on such and such a date."

There had been no slightest detail by which the sender could be in any way identified, and since communication with the Paris bank had proved the purchaser of the drafts to be unknown, the clever, audacious and virtually honest young woman would probably remain forever a mystery. No one could know, the writer pursued, what dire straits had driven her to commit the deed, and since she had accomplished it with a courage and ingenuity few men might have been capable of, and had expiated it with conscientious honesty scarcely consistent with the obviously intentional fraudulence of her act, condemnation must give way, if not to admiration, at least to sympathy with a fellow-being briefly driven from the rectitude of her natural course by some disastrous current, the force of which none but she could justly estimate.

To Longstaff the conventional and constrained plea for generous judgment of a deed by which Marian had risked so much for another's sake, and the bitter consequences of which had perhaps marred her life and left his a void, was both galling and, in a small way, gratifying. Unreasoningly he was piqued by the circumspect cowardice with which the writer touched upon, as merely possible, an unconquerable force of circumstances that had driven her to do what scarcely one out of a million would have dared

for so unselfish an object. He resented the chary recognition of courage and integrity that, to him, was sublime and lifted her to unapproachable heights above the cowardly, law-tyrannized masses, who would see their loved ones perish rather than risk the world's condemnation or jeopardize their own moral security. For the moment he was possessed by a mad desire to have the whole world know the true incentive of her deed—that all should see it as did he, and give her the praise he felt she deserved.

Then as his love, so long suppressed, surged through him like sudden fever, his head fell on his arm, and for one hour he remained there alone, struggling with himself and seeking some gleam of hope, through the black fog of despair enveloping him.

Presently the thought came that if she had returned the money to others, she would surely also return it to him, and if she did, the barrier between them would no longer exist.

He sat up, penetrated by an idea that set his pulses racing.

According to the account he had read the drafts had been received in London the previous morning, and consequently must have been posted in Paris two days before, and if one had been sent to him . . .

He had left a pile of unopened letters on his desk; perhaps among those was one from the Paris bank. Surely, however permanently she had closed him out of her life—if not entirely from her memory, as the statue received that day proved—she would not omit him from among those to whom she had canceled her debt.

Incited by the thought, he hurried to the street, and ten minutes later reentered his office.

Blackwell was still at his desk, and looked up in surprise. "Hallo!" he said; "have you lunched already?"

"No, took a walk," returned Longstaff as he hung up his coat. "That's all I needed."

He went to his desk and looked quickly through the letters for one typewritten and bearing the French

stamp. There were several business epistles, and then came an oblong blue envelope postmarked Boston, and addressed in large writing that made his heart stop briefly.

Under the shock it caused him his brain refused to work at once. He gazed at the envelope like one stunned, until the persuasion that it contained a letter from her spurred him to open it.

Within was a draft for seventy-two pounds, enclosed in a blank sheet of note-paper corresponding to the envelope.

He studied the unblemished page in a turmoil of ever-changing emotions, turning it quickly on every side, then slowly, as though perusing invisible writing that told him much more than could any words she might have written. It told him what she dared not express, that her thoughts were with him, that they had been with him always, as was evidenced by the coming of the statue, and the fact that she had sent this enclosure to him with her own hand, betraying by it where she was if he chose to look for her.

Calculating by the date on the postmark, it had taken eight days for the draft to reach him, and as those sent from Paris had been despatched three days back, she must have had someone attend to the matter for her, as she could not possibly have reached Paris from Boston in five days. Probably her brother had come on. Of course, his work was on exhibition there; he was in Paris to attend to that! And she—Marian—had remained in Boston. . . . He would look up Philip, and have a talk with him, and then—

He sat a few moments, tapping the desk softly, his lips twitching with a nervous smile in response to fancies that carried him far away. Presently he spoke without raising his eyes, but the words came firmly and distinctly:

"I say, Blackwell, I'm going to run over to Paris this afternoon, and—if you like, I shall undertake the management of that affair in New York. It will never be satisfactorily settled by letter. I'll sail Saturday."

"ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE"

By Zona Gale

WHOEVER has chanced to see two lovers outlined against a sky "thick with stars" knows for the first time the possibilities of the stars as a background.

On the evening of Miss Wilhelmina Lillieblade's *fête champêtre* Pelleas and I first won this true appreciation of the firmament. We had wandered away from the others in the iris pavilions on the lawn and had gone up the spiral stairway to the Wistaria Tower. The tower lies at the end of the veranda, on the lip of the highest terrace, and overlooks the distance in a fashion to make any two who sit there fall in love with the greater part of the world, including each other. And Pelleas and I, though we are seventy years old, have a habit of looking out all such high places of the heart instead of soberly circumscribing our days by a breakfast, a walk, a wish and an objection, according to a precedent which has gained some authority.

We paused on the spiral stair of the tower. Wistaria ran up the rail, and the vine's love of life brimmed over in blossoms—or so I thought as I touched the purple clusters. Would it not be the happiest satisfaction if, when we are particularly radiant over affairs, we could behave like the plants? As if, with the sun of some happiness given to others, one should find roses in one's hair; or, with the joy of love for love, there should be—lo! violets in one's hands.

"I said something of this to Pelleas.

"Ah, well," Pelleas answered, as we stood on the spiral stair, "I think that something like that may be true. For example," he added, pulling a spray

of wistaria to thrust in my hands, "here we are—specially happy. And behold, we find our hands filled with wistaria!"

I laughed at his charming absurdity and, in the same breath, sighed for the poor people of seventy who move in a mere universe of diets and draughts.

"Pelleas," I remember observing, "it is very wonderful to say 'I love you.' But it is downright magic to say, 'I have loved you for fifty years,' as we can say."

And, "Think," Pelleas added, "of saying one thing for fifty years, and still believing it!"

I said, as I am never tired of saying, that this ought to be some vague proof of immortality.

"Oh, it is," Pelleas affirmed confidently as we went up the spiral stair.

In the tower the wistaria is so thick that it makes a kind of window-box to heaven. And in the middle of this window-box, like two spirits using it for a pulpit from which to preach the truth about life, we saw Rosemary and her young lover—that young Austin Wyeth, whom we had never seen, but about whom of late we had been hearing a volume of opinion—and they were outlined against a sky "thick with stars." And Pelleas and I, who in all matters like this pretend great wisdom, are certain that Rosemary had just lifted her face to his. And as for the entire firmament, that was merely the setting.

We had time, while we were fleeing, to hear two words. One was interrogative, one was positive, and the two words were one. They were:

"Always?" from that young lover.

And "Always," from Rosemary.

Sometimes I have wondered what all the other words in the lexicons may be for, and why everyone writes so untiringly at love poems. Why not add it all up and write down a total of "always" and close the account? Yet somehow that very word gets itself amazingly omitted from some love-stories.

"O Pelleas," I said breathlessly, at the foot of the spiral stair, "isn't that enough to make everyone believe?"

"Believe?" Pelleas repeated—but I knew that he knew what I meant.

"I would like to hear anyone doubt the reality of happiness in my presence, ever," I said with conviction; "or doubt anything else!" I added triumphantly.

Pelleas answered quite seriously. "Happiness must be true," he said, "for here are our hands full of wistaria."

As for me, I have always found that to be proof enough of anything divine.

After an evening of iris pavilions and happy talk and music that was another way of thinking one's own thoughts, Pelleas and I slipped away as the last guests were, so to speak, folding their petals in the hallway, and we said good night to Miss Willie, whose house-party was closing with that night's *fête*, and went up to our rooms.

The maid whom Miss Willie had sent for me was waiting up, and she came toward us with a charming effect of a full-blown dahlia that was sleepy. This Dahlia had a note for us, which read:

DEAR ETTARRE:

May I come to your sitting-room when everyone has gone? I must see you and Pelleas tonight.

WILLIE.

"Tell Miss Lillieblade that we will see her at once," I said to the Dahlia; and, "don't wait up," I added, upon which she looked as if the sun had come out somewhere; and, "What can Miss Willie possibly have on her mind at two in the morning, Pelleas?" I wondered, with the closing of the door.

"Burglars," Pelleas thought, "or a ruffle of gossipy drums," he guessed frivolously. "What else at this hour?"

"I can't think," I said; "but knowing Miss Willie, I suspect that it may be some curious new fact in natural history. You remember that she once telephoned to us at one in the morning, to say that she had just heard that her Burmese wishing-tree had arrived and was detained in the customs, and that she thought of offering the Government a wish for the duty?"

"True," Pelleas said, "but this is two o'clock."

For though Pelleas is a creature of stars he is, like them, built on a mathematical basis. He believes in exactness as I believe in, say, color.

In a very few minutes Miss Wilhelmina Lillieblade came to our door, tinkling with jet, her gray curls astray, a round, red spot high on either cheek. Miss Willie is seventy, as well as we, and the white staff which she carries makes her very majestic—to those who do not know that she keeps two kinds of pills in the head.

"Pelleas," said Miss Willie, tapping her white staff, "can you and Ettarre go to California immediately—immediately, and take Rosemary with you?"

"Certainly," Pelleas said simply. Sometimes I wonder whether if a friend of ours should ask Pelleas for Alpha Centauri, he would not compute the cost of a canal through the Great Divide.

"I may have to come out myself, a little later," she went on. "My nerves, I think they say, have gone off in different directions—and I have a doctor who is perfectly unmanageable, and urges travel. But Rosemary must leave at once."

"Ah, but why—why, Willie?" cried I, who am a woman.

"Austin Wyeth," replied Miss Willie comprehensively, and unpinned a little silk bag of lavender from her pocket and sniffed it—with her a sign of extreme agitation.

"I saw them coming down from the Round Tower this evening," said Miss Willie. "I—I am certain that he kissed her."

Pelleas and I dropped our eyes to

the lavender bag. It would never have done for us to say, "Why not?" but I shall never say that we did not think it. "The world is so difficult and a kiss is so easy," Pelleas once said—provided that it is followed by thousands of others by the same person all one's life, of course he meant.

"Fine young fellow, is he not?"

"Yes," said Miss Willie grimly, "he is. If the legal tender of his country were dried beans, or the like. He has absolutely nothing."

"O-oh," said Pelleas. "Ah, well, now, neither have I. Neither have many really estimable people."

Miss Willie waved the bag of lavender.

"That young man," she said, "couldn't keep Rosemary in postage-stamps."

"But what would she want with postage-stamps," Pelleas demanded reasonably, "if they two were always to be together?"

"Besides," said I, "if people want postage-stamps more than they want each other, I have always noticed that the affair falls through of itself. And if they don't—ah, well, now, the letters always get stamped somehow, Wilhelmina."

Miss Willie shut her lips firmly and opened the top of her cane. One kind of pill that she carries is orange and is for her heart, and when we saw, now, that her selection was orange, we both relented.

"Let us," Pelleas said, "take Rosemary to California by all means. We have nothing to keep us. Shall we go tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow, if possible," said Miss Willie unexpectedly, "I wish there were a train now." Whereupon she told us more about the matter, and Pelleas and I listened, miserably in sympathy with those young lovers in their princely disregard of how they were ever to get their letters stamped.

Rosemary was Miss Wilhelmina's ward. Austin Wyeth was a sort of fifth secretary to some great concern in Wall street—the kind of firm that per-

forms a business in which adjectives are put to alien uses, like "preferred," and "sheared," and "watered." And the adjectives seemed not to profit all the secretaries amazingly, since Miss Willie made us understand that, beyond carfare and salt, young Wyeth's life was unpaid by itself.

"Rosemary," she said, "has expensive habits. I wish her to have them. It was a part of her education to acquire them. Then her denials will mean something. Deliver me from these rich men's daughters who get in the papers for denying themselves things for which they have never been taught the taste. If I've never had an art-choke am I to be praised for limiting myself to cabbage? Rosemary has acquired the tastes—heaven knows! Now I wish her to be taught the superficiality of them. But I will not have the lesson taught her by forced economy. Forced economy never does anything to women but spoil their hands. What counts is voluntary denial. I mean her to learn that, as an art."

Pelleas and I looked as polite as we could while our hearts were beating out so many contrary opinions.

"And after she has learned this voluntary economy," said Pelleas cunningly, with averted eyes, "*then* I suppose she may marry Wyeth?"

"By no means," said Miss Willie crisply. "She must then marry wealth, so as to be in a position to teach all this to others."

So the next morning—the journey having been postponed long enough to permit trunks to go, too—it fell to me to break to Rosemary the news that we three were to leave next afternoon for at least three months in the West, with a probable journey to Alaska when the weather became hot. I chose the time after the postman's visit when Rosemary, in the library, was still dreaming over a letter which she had read three times. (How do they do it? Even I, who am a very busybody of romance, cannot imagine how these young lovers can leave their sweethearts at two in the morning, after a dance, and send back a five-page letter by eight-o'clock post.

I dare say, for all my sympathy, that my art is very simple.)

I pinched a Joyling lily from its stem and wafted it toward her face before I spoke. I have a theory that a flower is always an argument, either way.

"Rosemary," said I, "if Uncle Pelleas and I"—we are "uncle" and "aunt" by our names, which are youthful, and not by our blood, which is old—"Rosemary, if Uncle Pelleas and I were to leave for California tomorrow, could you be persuaded to go with us, dear?"

Rosemary looked up at me with startled swiftness—precisely as your great wilding asters seem when you uplift their faces.

"How did you know?" she asked.

"Miss Wilhelmina suggested it last night," I told her, "and Uncle Pelleas and I were delighted."

Rosemary was wearing something of old pink, and I saw how her delicate face caught its faint color. Pelleas said afterward that Rosemary in that gown was a good deal like a butterfly bow pinned to the Morris chair.

"California," she said; "*California!*"

Secretly I was relieved. Did the child then care so much for traveling that, child-wise, the prospect of the journey absorbed and delighted her?

Rosemary clapped her hands.

"*California!*" she said again. "Oh, Aunt Ettarre—will you? *Will you?*"

Secretly, I was never so faintly disappointed. For there was in her eyes not a hint of a proper grief at absence from that young lover. But was Rosemary like this? Was *this* all that it had meant to her to be doubly silhouetted against a sky "thick with stars"? Perhaps Miss Willie knew better than Pelleas and I. Perhaps Miss Willie was right.

"Could you be ready to leave tomorrow afternoon, Rosemary?" I asked. "You and your maid. Miss Wilhelmina is quite willing—if you can be ready."

"Oh!" Rosemary cried, "yes, yes, yes! Of course I can be ready. Oh, you darling—you darling!"

"Rosemary," said I severely, "you

do not show proper regret at leaving anyone."

Rosemary laughed, and sent me a look that was curiously bewitching, and tossed me the Joyling lily as she went away.

"Of course I don't," she said, "you—darling!"

She puzzled me, and I went to look out Pelleas. He was in our room arranging his newspaper clippings. Pelleas's idea of packing for a journey is to settle a fat envelope of newspaper clippings in the bottom of a bag, and to ask me whether everything else is in.

Why is it that the most chivalrous of men will cheerfully drop over an abyss to pick up your handkerchief and, once down there, will sit on a boulder and watch you put the handkerchief in your trunk and pack all their handkerchiefs besides?

"Pelleas," I announced, "love is not what it used to be."

"Ah, well," Pelleas said, "why not improve on constancy? There was room for it."

"The world is growing worse," I said miserably.

Pelleas looked at me.

"Is it?" he asked. "Is it, Ettarre?"

"No," said I.

It is a wonderful fact, if you only love someone enough, all debates prove the same thing: that the world is growing better.

"And Pelleas—" I said.

I think he knew that I meant something unruly by the very angle of my cap ribbon, which I imagine always betrays me.

"Inasmuch," I suggested shamelessly, "as we are to go to California, and Rosemary is *not* to be provided with lifelong postage-stamps by that young lover, do you see—do we see any reason why, tomorrow, she should not—why he should not—?"

"Tell her good-bye?" Pelleas completed. "At the station? But certainly not. No reason in the world. In fact, it will give me time to have my shoes polished."

"And I can make a collection of

folders and ask the man a thousand questions!" I cried joyfully.

Toward evening I found opportunity to tell Rosemary about this. She was just leaving the telephone, and her eyes were very bright. There is something about telephones—but then, I know next to nothing about science, and eyes are always easy to understand.

"Rosemary," I announced, "we shall go down to the station very early tomorrow, if you will."

"Yes, dear," Rosemary said.

"Uncle Pelleas wishes to have his shoes polished," I explained.

"Yes, dear," Rosemary said politely.

"And I wish to make a collection of folders and ask the man a thousand questions," I elaborated.

"Yes, dear," Rosemary said vaguely.

"And I thought," I went on, actually in some embarrassment, "that, at the station, if you didn't mind waiting—by yourself—about fifteen minutes—over by the flower-stand—why, then, that you might not mind waiting by yourself, for—about fifteen minutes—over by the flower-stand," I concluded in detail.

Rosemary looked at me for a moment, searchingly, in the dusk of the hall. Then she took a step forward uncertainly, and touched my hand with one of hers, which I squeezed.

"Oh," Rosemary said then, with a little indrawn breath of pure delight, "you darling—you darling!"

Yet afterward I told Pelleas about it most discontentedly.

"You see," I said doubtfully, "she said just that about going to California, too."

"Ah, well," said Pelleas, nodding, "it's a very good word to say. It always means *something strong*, you know, Ettarre."

Miss Willie Lillieblade saw us off the next afternoon. By that I mean that she saw us as far on our way as the big Samarkand rug in the hall. I would as soon have fancied a white wax taper accompanying anyone to a railway station as Miss Willie. Moreover, she is one of the women about

whose traveling I am always wondering. For I simply cannot imagine Miss Willie in a railway train. I can as easily think of a spiral of smoke, or a little darting flame, followed by a maid and boarding a Pullman, as to fancy Miss Willie on a journey. There are other women like her—women such as one never sees in coaches. I am always wondering how they travel. They are enough to make one believe in a magic carpet which, stepped on, spirits one where one wishes—though, indeed, I half believe in such carpets, anyway.

"Good-bye," said Miss Willie, from the Samarkand. "Don't you get smashed up."

"Ah, well, no," Pelleas promised, "not without provocation. Depend upon us not to get smashed up without some reason for it, Miss Willie. Of course, one's reasons always change everything."

Rosemary had kissed her and run down to the carriage.

"Mind," Miss Willie said to us, "I rely upon you. I have had a talk with Rosemary. No letters, even from Austin Wyeth. And none to him."

"Did she agree to that?" I asked uneasily.

"With really remarkable docility," Miss Willie answered with satisfaction. "I can see that her training is taking undoubted effect."

"H'm!" said Pelleas, poking at the rug with his umbrella. "Taught her to love one man so she can learn voluntary economy and give him up?"

It makes Pelleas very nervous to travel, and the result is that he is always more frank than at any other time; rather nervously frank, I fancy. Some time I shall make a study of the Philosophy of Candor, On and Near Railway Trains for Long Journeys. For example, if I loved a man and meant to love him always, I might conceal it from him up to the very second that I boarded the train, but I should tell him then. And, I found myself thinking, if I were Rosemary and had to wait for fifteen minutes near the flower-stand before I left for Cali-

fornia, I believe that I should be betrothed before my train was called.

"By no means!" Miss Willie was saying sharply. "I teach her to love anyone? Though, Ettarre, really, there is that delightful miner's son to consider—the one whose father and I planned the match for them, when Rosemary was six. I shall send them a letter to you. The father is so rich that he never comes East, and I'm told that the son is a fine, dependable young fellow—mines, and so on. However, I merely wish Rosemary to forget—to bury one Cæsar, as it were; not necessarily to praise another. But—" Miss Willie paused and fixed me with her little bead eyes. "You know," she concluded, "you and Pelleas are famous match-makers. And this California is famous for its splendid young fellows with—"

"Quite so," said Pelleas; "with postage-stamps."

Though she smiled adorably, I saw Miss Willie taking an orange pill as we left her. For, after all, she was trusting us with a great deal. And, remembering this, I was suddenly so conscience-smitten that I fancied the very ribbons of my cap signaled in the air as I went down the steps a betraying, "Flower-stand. Fifteen minutes."

But I had given my word to Rosemary; and the expectation in her face as we went in the Grand Central Station would have made me keep a promise which I had never made.

"Go over by the flowers, my dear," I bade her. "We will join you in fifteen minutes. Then nobody will be lost," I bore out my arrangement somewhat lamely.

I turned and tucked Rosemary's maid under my arm. She hesitated, looking after Rosemary, but I sent her firmly to buy a magazine. And trunks to check, folders to select, and a thousand questions to ask of the man who answers "as a clock ticks and knows not wherefore," used up our fifteen minutes at the very instant that our express was called. I shall not say that, secretly, I had not contrived a glimpse past a pillar to see Rosemary, in dark

blue cloth, outlined against the flame of the flower-stand, while a most attractive back, turned squarely toward me, seemed to have in presumable connection eyes for only Rosemary. And I saw that she was looking up—I had time for no more, but I saw that. And I have never known two to stand in a station in precisely that unconscious fashion that the explanation was far to seek.

Then, as our train was called, the fancy that had been haunting me actually seized upon me. It was not a fancy original with me. Indeed, since the first lovers parted at the Grand Central Station in New York I suppose that the idea has actually inhabited the air about the spot. I think that it must have been practised thousands of times. But never before, I must believe, at the hands of a most sentimental old woman.

"Pelleas," I said, "is that our train on *that* track?"

"Yes. Yes, I think it is," he answered.

"Pelleas," I said, "what a severe-looking man that is at the gate."

"Ah, yes," said Pelleas without interest. "Yes, he is."

"And Pelleas," I went on, "the train stops at Poughkeepsie. I asked the man with the folders."

"Poughkeepsie?" Pelleas repeated politely.

He is by no means without the fancies of romance either, yet I had to tell him. I looked guiltily at Rosemary's maid, but she was making delighted work of refusing our bags to a handsome porter.

"Pelleas," I said, "you know it is the very last time and the very last good-bye—for them. Don't you think you might get a ticket to Poughkeepsie and return, and three chair-car seats? You could stay in the smoker. And I'll go on and be in my section with the bags—"

Pelleas looked at me a bit blankly for a moment.

"That gateman looks *frightfully* severe, Pelleas," I urged. "He never will let Austin Wyeth through."

Then I saw that Pelleas's vision cleared.

"Good heavens, Ettarre," he said, "what a woman you are!"

We have learned to be lenient to each other's virtues and follies alike.

He thought for a moment and then he called the handsome porter.

"Single to Poughkeepsie and return, two chair seats, one way. Young lady by the flowers—yes, by the third telephone booth. Give them to her. Tell her I will show her ticket at the gate and join them later," he said.

But Pelleas and I both knew, as we waited to see the message delivered, that he would not join them later. For that would make the whole affair official. For us even to meet that young lover would make the matter official. And it was not so. It was very unofficial. When we saw that they had the tickets I had piled my belongings on Rosemary's maid to take her attention.

"That young man with no postage-stamps," Pelleas said, giving me his arm, "is a fine young fellow. Give him the direction of the wind and I'll warrant he'll find something for it to blow."

At the gate I think that I must have triumphed over that severe-looking gateman. For I have found all people at such gates so merciless to lovers that I have a feud with their kind. I appeal to everyone if, when a charming girl shows a ticket at the iron gate and one man in her party stands miserably outside, smiling manfully, it should not be enough to satisfy any railroad company for the charming girl to say to the gateman, "We two are betrothed." That should be the lover's passport. I can see no reason why the gross earnings of any company should be lessened by that. Though, indeed, the company may be thrifty, after all. For I have no doubt that it reaps richly upon tickets to Poughkeepsie and return.

At Poughkeepsie Pelleas came strolling into my state-room.

"Did—did you see him, Pelleas?" I asked.

"I have been asleep in the smoker," Pelleas explained elaborately.

"Pelleas," I said, "I feel as if we were saying good-bye."

"I think I dreamed that we just had said good-bye," Pelleas declared gravely.

"Rosemary for remembrance," and we were to teach her to forget! Pelleas and I, whose chief use in life is to bring together lovers, timid or estranged; Pelleas and I, who would as lief rob two lovers as to separate them.

There was a stir in the door, and I saw the purple of violets and the dark blue of Rosemary's gown. She came into the state-room and stooped to the window and, as the train pulled out, I had the merest glimpse of somebody running on the platform beside our car, his boy's face shining. Who was there to mind the kiss that I thought I saw him send? Not Pelleas and I, complaining to each other that we had left all our folders in the station.

Rosemary sat down opposite to us. I glanced at her, dreading that look of unshed tears. To my utter amazement her face was shining above its violets, as that boy's face had shone on the station platform.

"Pelleas," I said voluntarily, "Rosemary must be happy. See her flowers."

For our fancy is that love of life brims over in blossoms; and it was as if, with this joy of love for love, there were—lo! violets in her hands.

Rosemary looked at Pelleas and me, and her face was sparkling with some understanding that I did not understand. Then she laid the violets upon my lap; but that told nothing, for I always think that flowers are an argument either way.

"Oh, you darlings—you darlings!" I heard Rosemary saying.

On which I looked at Pelleas in bewilderment. Was this to be a situation not, after all, dominated by Miss Willie's consideration for postage-stamps?

II

PELLEAS and I stood at the end of the veranda, which was really a cloister of the old Mission on whose site our hotel had been built. We had left Rosemary, a kind of flower in a calyx of young folk, above-stairs; and we had come away here, in delight. The veranda enclosed three sides of the quadrangle—a little space of grass cunningly won from the sand, set with magnolias and palms and bordered with flaming poinsettias. Below lay a fringe of the town of World's End, and then the desert, stretching away to the foothills of the great ranges. Midway, divined in the twilight, the adobe hut of the old Spanish priest, Father Hyacinth, was soft with roses, neighboring, in our perspective, the far summit snow.

"Pelleas," I said, chilled by the reserve of the distance, "only fancy: no matter how happy the poor desert is, it can never burst out in bloom."

For it has long been our belief that love of life brims over in blossoms, as we had said of the wistaria on the spiral stair at home.

"Ah, well, now," Pelleas contended, "who knows? Perhaps the desert has flowers that we can tell nothing about—flowers too fine for us to see."

"And there would always be the priest's roses," I said, smiling.

"But perhaps the very stars are its flowers!" Pelleas concluded with a mild air of triumph.

At this I looked with quickened sight toward the desert sky where the stars were gathering. In that clear air we seemed all but close enough to touch this star and that, if we had cared to count them in some heavenly game of:

This little Earth went to market;
This little Mars stayed at home;
Mercury had roast beef;
Jupiter had none.
Venus cried out . . .

and so on. But, as Pelleas said, why touch and count the stars even if one can do so? For stars are only a background, and out here there were none to be silhouetted as lovers, as our conception of the firmament demands.

We took a turn in the dimming cloister, sweet with the Southern heliotrope that ran between the pillars thick as the wistaria on the Round Tower at home. We looked away to the east where the thwarting ranges sharpened the desert distance lying exquisite, silent, exhaustless. And I think that some little winged thing which pierces every heart was piercing our hearts then. For Pelleas said solemnly:

"Ettarre, isn't distance awful?"

I protest that I started, as if the whole race of separated lovers had said a word in my ear. On my honor I believe that, the week long, Pelleas and I had been thinking as much of Rosemary as that young lover of hers in New York, whom we were to teach her to forget.

"Ah, well," I said lightly, "distance isn't impassable. There were Hero and Leander and the Hellespont, you know."

"And Orpheus and Eurydice and Hell," Pelleas added briskly. "Oh, no. Distance isn't impassable."

We turned back toward the cloister's end; and perhaps the ancient spirit of the place smote me to a recollection of our duty to Rosemary's guardian, Miss Willie.

"Distance is impassable if it is best that it should be so," I said severely, and looked at Pelleas with a heaven-forgive-me in my eyes. But Pelleas looked at me as one who should say, "Heaven won't."

The words were in our hearts as we neared the end of the cloister. Here the heliotrope hung thick with bloom, so that the nook became a kind of window-box to heaven. And as we stepped softly on we heard a little stir and, within the window-box, like spirits using it to preach the truth about life, we saw two figures—of lovers—outlined against the near, clear sky of stars. And Pelleas and I, who in all matters like this pretend great wisdom, were instantly certain that one had just lifted her face to the other. Whoever has chanced to see two lovers outlined against a sky "thick with stars" knows for the first time the

possibilities of the stars as a background. But as for Pelleas and me, the entire firmament became merely the setting for our horror. For she of the lifted face was Rosemary.

If we would, we could not have escaped, for at once Rosemary turned and saw us through the deepening dusk. I remember thinking that she came toward us like one who is very happy, for there should be flowers in the hands of all happy people, and in Rosemary's hands I saw the Southern heliotrope. And, too, she spoke quite simply, as happy people speak.

"Aunt Ettarre—Uncle Pelleas, I have been looking for you everywhere," she said. "This is Mr. Camp."

Looking for us everywhere—on the sands of the desert, one would suppose! And as to *this* being Mr. Camp, we had never heard of him. Ah! who was Pelleas, then, to say, "The world is so difficult, and a kiss is so easy"? Who was I to have been thinking, heaven help me, of Rosemary's young lover in New York? Who were Pelleas and I together to teach Rosemary to forget, who could forget like this?

Before we could say more than the necessary, "Ah, indeed?" to prove ourselves conscious, the Mr. Camp came to us, and caught our hands, and fairly wrung them as he looked in our faces in the half-light.

"I am so happy—I am so happy," he said to us earnestly, "and I am so devoted—already. Will you let me say that? I have only this moment arrived. I—I have brought you a letter from Miss Lillieblade."

"From Miss Lillieblade?" Pelleas and I repeated stupidly. And "So you know Miss Wilhelmina?" Pelleas said.

"The letter came to my father for me," explained this amazing envoy of Miss Willie's. "When I was a little chap, Rosemary and I—Miss Wilhelmina and my father—there was a sort of understanding, do you see—"

Then Pelleas and I remembered with a rush of comparative relief that this would be he of whom Miss Willie had told us, that "fine, dependable young fellow," whom she had years ago set

her heart upon Rosemary's marrying. "His father is so rich that he never comes East," she told us. "His father before him used to brag that he knew every bazaar in Asia and had never seen Fifth avenue. He is the American Orientalized type—and charming." I remembered—and was relieved—and was sunk in new horror. What of the kiss, the kiss, *the kiss*?

"My home is very near here," the boy was explaining; "three hours—by motor. You will let me see very much of you all?" he begged—and for all his charming courtesy his eyes were on Rosemary. For that matter, I could see that Rosemary's eyes were on him a bit, too.

For half an hour we four sat in the dusk of the cloister, there being no calico lights of civilization there to make the shadows seem ready-made instead of "born softly"; and from within our rooms the candles threw over us light of the texture of cloth-of-gold. And as I looked at this young Mr. Camp, I felt a kind of rebellious loyalty to that young lover of Rosemary's in New York; for, it may have been the texture of the light about us, but it seemed to me that this stranger here with us, so manifestly at Rosemary's feet already, looked unmistakably the role of sweetheart, of fairy prince. You will have observed, I dare say, that there are simple, elegant young fellows who do look like this? I cannot tell what it may be, but I protest that when I see such a one I can all but hear his silver trumpet winding at the castle gate and see his shining armor and his pennon—as if I myself sat at some lattice in the castle tower. This is because I am a most sentimental old woman. But not so sentimental that now I was not in a kind of indignant terror for the sake of Rosemary's young lover in New York. It is quite true that I intended to do my conscientious duty by Miss Willie and to teach Rosemary to forget him. But was it necessary, I appeal to everyone, in the name of love, that she should forget at the hands of some new love affair? We had come out here to bury a lover in oblivion, not

to dance upon his grave. I dare say that I was taking a great deal for granted, but that young stranger was so disturbingly like a fairy prince that, when he left us, I found myself in a fine rage with him as well as with nearly everyone else in the world. And so, I think, did Pelleas.

That young Mr. Camp had come in his car from some town a few groves away—why do they not measure the roads so?—and he had our promise to motor with him the next afternoon. When he took his leave Pelleas went with him down through the magnolias of the quadrangle, and Rosemary slipped away to her room—to my relief, for I could not meet her eyes. “Uncle Pelleas says that the world is difficult and a kiss is easy—do you find it so?” was on the tip of my tongue; but I waited to consult with Pelleas.

In our sitting-room I found the mail from the last post awaiting me, and there was a letter from Miss Willie.

It's just as I thought [she complained]. They've found that I've nerves where I ought to have blood-vessels—or something of the sort, vastly important and physiological. And my unmanageable doctor urges change. I may go to China—you know I've never seen China, and I'd like to be sure before I die that my Samarkand rug is an antique.

Also, I'd like to see you both, and Rosemary, *en route*.

And now by the way, that young Camp, who was Rosemary's sweetheart at six, *Nothing, Ettarre, could be more desirable*. I'm told that his mines are positively brimming with pans, or whatever it is they have. Don't neglect him. And don't shake your head at me. I'm not so sure I'm worldly. Some of the love-matches that I have observed have been about the worldliest things imaginable. To which I would by far prefer the painful mine.

I was folding this letter—and very thoughtfully, I will admit—when Pelleas came in. I think I remember that we avoided each other's eyes, for we both feel very guilty when we are obliged to accuse Rosemary.

“What do you think of him, Pelleas?” I asked without preface, for our minds were close to that young stranger, motoring off to his home, a few groves away.

“Fine young fellow, I'm afraid,” he

answered uneasily—and I knew that he, too, was remembering that young lover in New York.

“Mines?” I hazarded distastefully.

“I think so,” he replied, with a shrug, “and rolling in postage-stamps, I imagine.”

Perhaps a woman of genius would not have stayed awake all night, as I did—although I distrust all people who can sleep in trouble as much as I distrust those who keep other people awake on account of it. Over and over I kept asking myself whether what we had seen could possibly be that Love-at-first-sight in which I have so steadfastly disbelieved. For I think that my roses must always bloom gently, by the sunshine of heaven, and not precipitantly, like paper flowers. And I could not understand Rosemary, for she had been well brought up, like blush roses. For myself, I would as lief be presented with a trim, pen-and-ink-done soul as to find love ready-made. I would always decide deliberately about both my hats and my loves, lest peradventure they might not become me. And oh, that poor young lover in New York, his boy's face shining on the station platform! Certainly we would teach Rosemary to forget him, but must we be the means, just now, of her meeting Someone Else? “Her meeting Someone Else” is the bogey of every man who is in love. Must Pelleas and I be the very purveyors of bogies?

Something of all this was in my mind next morning, while I sat alone on the veranda looking away toward the great ranges, perfect in their gracious reserve. And it was as if the little winged thoughts that greet all hearts and thwart the distance came out of that distance to greet me when, presently, two telegrams were dropped upon my lap. The first was from Miss Willie and it came like a postscript to her letter. The message was:

It's China. Coming Thursday Thursday Thursday Thursday Thursday Thursday night.

That day was Thursday. She would arrive that night. But even in my ex-

ciment I smiled at her whimsy to win her due of ten words. Miss Willie could afford to go to China every day, if she chose; but she will have every telegraphic pound of flesh. I have always thought that it must have been this vagary of hers which distracted me, so that I almost absently opened the second envelope. And I read:

Good morning this side the mountains, dear. Morning's at seven. All's right with the world.

AUSTIN.

The date was that day. The place was World's End. Austin Wyeth, that young lover in New York, had followed Rosemary to California. And I, one of the bunglers of earth, had rushed in upon their secret by way of this telegram.

I was horrified, regretful, apprehensive—but I had a little voice of laughter in my heart. Miss Willie—yes, and Pelleas and I—to the contrary, that young lover had proved himself the upright, energetic stuff of which dreams are made. Ah, and I liked his telegram—that blessed young lover who could pay telegraph tolls on his Browning. Why do we not all do it? I marvel that we do not ravish our substance gloriously by telegraphing all day the magic that we know. As, "Our maple is reddening. It stands against the west." Or, "The scarlet tanagers are back in the box alder." Or, "There is a new moon." I fancy that I took refuge from the situation in thinking about the magic of such messages. And in the midst of my bewilderment Rosemary, in pink dimity, appeared on the veranda and came tripping toward me, among my scattered thoughts.

Pelleas tells me that I have a way of appalling directness, and I think that this may be so. For, with a mere word of blunt apology for my mistake, I handed Rosemary her telegram.

She read the message. What would she be feeling, I wondered miserably, remembering that moment against last evening's stars. I glanced at her almost in embarrassment. To my utter amazement she was looking buoyantly, radiantly happy, so that I pro-

test I half expected to see roses in her hair and violets in her hands. Then she looked down and met my eyes.

"Rosemary," I said with all my sternness, "I am deeply sorry that I am so awkward as to have opened this message. But since I have done so, do you expect me to keep your secret?"

"But *this*, Aunt Ettarre," Rosemary explained impressively, "was a *telegram*. I said I wouldn't have any letters."

I often lift my hands at the ethics of Twenty.

"But see," I said simply; and gave her Miss Willie's telegram. "Thursday is today. Now what?" said I.

"O-oh!" Rosemary said only and dropped her head upon her hand. And when she is dejected Rosemary causes most people to forget every other consideration.

How do other temporary guardians manage these matters? I wondered uneasily. As for me, I have for so many years now been accustomed to say, "Kiss each other and meet life!" that I am quite out of practice in threats and denials. And so, I think, is Pelleas.

"Rosemary," I tried it with some brusqueness, "since this astonishing young sweetheart of yours has come on here from New York, and since Miss Willie is, mercifully, arriving tonight, I hope that you will not grieve her by any—any—"

"O-oh!" Rosemary said, with a long-drawn breath of a sob. "After she c-comes, c-can't I see him *at all*?"

"After she comes!" I cried in fine indignation. "And what about seeing him *before* she comes, pray?"

Rosemary's straying hair is always an argument. Her very profile is convincing. But her kiss is some exquisite apotheosis of the intent of the Inquisition. For everyone gives in. Her mouth upon my mouth—who am I to have withheld that?

"Will be motoring this afternoon—you *promised*," she was saying, "Aunt Ettarre! You *will* let me see him this morning?"

At this, I think that I closed my

eyes to keep my understanding. Rosemary's young lover was here from New York, and she was pleading her, "You *will* let me see him this morning?" What, then, of last night, and the kiss, the kiss, *the kiss?*

And at the memory of last night all my rebellious loyalty to that young lover of New York awoke. She had drawn him across the continent, Miss Willie was coming tonight, and Miss Willie openly favored that fairy prince, young Camp, with whom we were bound to motor all that afternoon.

I dare say that I acted as little as possible like other guardians. I know that I am a most sentimental old woman.

"Rosemary," said I, "Uncle Pelleas and I are driving this morning. If, while we are gone, you were to care to go for a walk for an hour or so, why—I see no objection—I think I may say that *we* see no objection—to your going for a walk, for an hour or so."

Rosemary put her arms about me.

"Oh, you darling—you darling!" she said.

"Heaven help me," I cried to myself, hastening away. "Can that be some spell that the child says over me?"

Pelleas and I returned from our drive with barely time for luncheon before our motor trip. I think that we both wore grave faces and, as is the way with all elderly sentimentalists, I was aghast at my own apostasy. I had told Pelleas about the telegram from this side the mountains, and also, boldly enough, about Rosemary's walk of an hour or so. As for Pelleas, his dear eyes had sparkled and his mouth had been drawn grave, and then his dear eyes had grown anxious and his lips had smiled; and together we had shaken our heads over the whole proceeding—with a little voice of laughter in our hearts.

"If only that fine young Austin Wyeth had a postage-stamp or two!" he sighed.

"If only Miss Willie knew that it

didn't matter whether he has or not!" I mourned.

Upon which we looked in each other's eyes and wondered heavily about Rosemary. Suppose Austin Wyeth had owned acres of postage-stamps, and suppose Miss Willie had devotedly approved of him? Still, *what of the kiss?*

After luncheon we found that young Mr. Camp waiting in the courtyard by his car, looking supremely like a lover.

"Please don't plan being back for dinner," he warned us; "I've some cold things in the hampers. We'll dine in the desert under a soap weed, at sunset. And we'll come back by moonlight and stop at the adobe hut for some of Father Hyacinth's roses."

"Then we must leave some word for Miss Willie, in case she arrives," Pelleas said to me; and I scribbled a message for her bewilderment.

"Gone to the desert to gather Father Hyacinth's roses. Back with the moon," I wrote. And, "She will like an hour or so to rest anyway," Pelleas and I told each other happily, as we stepped into the tonneau. Rosemary sat beside the fairy prince, and I could have found it in my heart to believe, as we shot through the magnolias of the quadrangle, that they were lovers kidnapping us, their dragon-keepers!

We drove straight into the glory of the Yellow Land, along a road that wound up hard, saffron dunes and called itself the Sunset Drive. We mounted and mounted in that clear air, and there was all the exultation of ascending, and all the peace of being folded in ways of warmth and amber. Remembering that afternoon, I know both the joy of our age—like a tender glow—and the joy of Rosemary's youth—like an exquisite glitter. Aye, and the joy of that young lover as well; for he was charming; though with every mile I grew more miserable for the sake of that poor Austin Wyeth who had followed his heart this side the mountains, and had telegraphed at dawn, and whom Rosemary must forget—had forgotten, indeed, for there was the kiss—the kiss—the kiss. As

I remembered, all the fierce warmth of the desert became the presence of that kiss in the world. And I think that it became so to Pelleas.

However, we had a wonderful afternoon, in spite of the qualm and the kiss. And when the west was flaming, as only the western west, so to speak, can flame, we sat high on a little mesa at the end of the Sunset Drive, facing the red clouds, with all the desert gold about us, and the hampers of cold things everywhere. I have never seen Rosemary so radiant. She seemed buoyantly happy—as happy as those who forget. "Rosemary for remembrance," and she did not remember. It is true that Pelleas and I meant to do our conscientious duty to Miss Willie and to teach her to forget; but was it necessary, in the name of love, that we should find this so easy?

I think that Pelleas had this in mind when, dropping his eyes from the far ranges to his jellied bouillon, he observed impassively:

"After all, distance isn't so awful."

"After all," said I, with an uncontrollable glance at Rosemary, "distance isn't impassable."

Rosemary had the grace to blush.

"There were Hero and Leander and the Hellespont," I pursued—with a kind of harmless malice.

"And Orpheus and Eurydice and Hell," Pelleas contributed briskly.

And, "Here's to the dear people who helped them all across, bless 'em!" cried young Mr. Camp, with courteous enthusiasm.

And, "You darling—you darlings!" whispered Rosemary to us—I dare say simply because she was so reprehensibly happy.

Undoubtedly those words were a spell which she used for the enchantment of Pelleas and me. Undoubtedly the full moon knew about it and, as we were speeding on our return, helped by rising over the great ranges. And we were so filled with the magic of that long silver journey that when at last we came upon Father Hyacinth's adobe hut, soft with roses, I could have found it in my heart to believe that the

old priest was some wizard able to transform us all.

So as we rolled to the gate of that place of roses I was prepared for all magic, save that magic which, as young Mr. Camp leaped down and opening the door of the tonneau, instantly occurred.

For, "Won't you help us?" he said beseechingly to Pelleas and me, his boy's face shining. "Rosemary and I want to be married before Miss Lillieblade gets here."

Picture that moment, in the Enchanted Desert!

"M-married?" said I—and so, I think, did Pelleas.

I looked to Rosemary for understanding, and I saw that her face was as happy as the face of one who forgets. There could be no doubt. Rosemary had forgotten, just as Miss Willie had hoped and intended. And then I recalled Miss Willie's letter, like an injunction for the moment. "*Nothing, Ettarre, could be more desirable,*" she had written to me of precisely this Fairy Prince Camp. And yet for some reason, known only to the catalogue of lovers' fears, these two believed Miss Willie to be their enemy! The delight of the situation caught me as if it had been laughter, and Pelleas understood and nodded to my look. Alas for our loyalty to that young lover in New York! I was even pricked on by my morning's apostasy of having permitted that walk of an hour or so. Duty to Miss Willie should come first, especially when duty was seasoned by a bit of love's jesting. And so Pelleas and I descended and, with a little voice of laughter in our hearts, entered the gate and met Father Hyacinth on his threshold of roses.

I have no idea whether Father Hyacinth solemnized that marriage, or whether it was done by the roses themselves. I only know that they two were married, in a fragrance of petals and tapers, with the moon peeping in at the open roof. I only know that I resolutely silenced my grief for that young Austin Wyeth and for this, my first desertion of the cause of a lover in

whom I believed. I only know that in the moment when the fairy prince turned to take his wife in his arms I heard a little thin, pricking staccato from among the roses at the door.

"Back with the moon," indeed!" it said. "I've come all the way here to find you!"

And there, her gray curls astray, a round red spot on either cheek, her white staff making her appallingly majestic, stood Miss Wilhelmina Lillieblade.

"Austin—oh, Austin," I heard Rosemary say.

"Austin Wyeth!" I heard Miss Willie's tragic voice.

That young husband stood there with Rosemary, as tranquil as Father Hyacinth himself. But Pelleas and I hurried excitedly beside them.

"No—no, Wilhelmina!" we cried together. "It is Mr. Camp—your Mr. Camp—Rosemary's Mr. Camp when she was six—"

"Camp?" cried Miss Willie, and unpinned from her pocket her little bag of lavender and sniffed it. "Camp, indeed! It is Austin Wyeth. And I tell you that he cannot keep Rosemary in postage-stamps!"

At this Pelleas put his arm about me, and we turned toward that young husband to know the truth.

"Please!" he said very gravely, "would you mind my being both?"

Miss Willie shook her white staff at him.

"What on earth do you mean?" she demanded.

He was very simple and manly—have I not said that I liked him from the first? And so, I am certain, did Pelleas.

"My father has hoped, since we were children, that Rosemary would marry me," said Rosemary's husband. "And I went on to New York and went to work in his Broad street house, so I might meet her as anyone else might, and, if I loved her, try to make her love me. My father knew. And, after a time, so did Rosemary. But you didn't like me, Miss Lillieblade. And so I couldn't embarrass you by telling you.

And so when Rosemary came here I followed her—almost to my own home—our home. And then you sent my father that letter for me—to Rosemary! But I knew that you didn't like me—and even then I couldn't tell you . . ."

Oh, as for Pelleas and me, there was a heavenly little voice of laughter in our hearts, even before he was done.

"I am Austin Wyeth Camp, you see," he told Miss Willie. "And Rosemary and I are married."

And how could Miss Willie possibly tell this husband of Rosemary's that she had only disapproved of him because she had believed him unable to keep Rosemary in postage-stamps? But she turned upon Pelleas and me.

"You knew of all this, I dare say?" she observed crisply.

Before we could frame our dazed and earnest denials Rosemary had her arms about Miss Willie—and only to look at Rosemary in her happiness was to believe, perforce, everything which she had not yet said. In an instant she had deliberately won Miss Willie's attention from us. Whereupon Pelleas and I suddenly met each other's eyes in a flood of what might as well have been guilt. We saw it all now—how Rosemary had believed the whole time that we knew everything. Her goodbye at the flower-stand and at the train—had we not arranged it? The walk of an hour or so that morning—had we not permitted it? The kiss—had we not let it go unrebuked? And here was that young Austin Camp, wringing our hands—and we remembered his toast in the desert: "Here's to the dear people who helped them all across—bless 'em!" I remembered Rosemary's delight when we had first mentioned California, and how she had bewildered us at Poughkeepsie. Of course they thought that we knew! But heaven help us for busybodies of romance; either way, we were guilty.

Miss Willie opened the top of her staff and took out an orange pill for her heart. And Rosemary crossed to Pelleas and me.

felt. "May there not," he says, "be superior beings, amused with any useful, though instinctive, attitude?"

Our mind may fall into, as I am speeding back to the alertnessed up at the stars lying in that clear air close enough to touch this star and that—

This little Earth went to market;
This little Mars stayed at home;
Mercury had roast beef;
Jupiter had none. . . .

I was saying over, purely to bring myself back to realities, when Pelleas spoke softly.

"Ettarre," he said, "it seems as if

I was living alone in the Temple that desire came over me almost every night. The plunge through the Middle Temple gateway was like the swimmer's plunge into rough water; I got past that "cool shock" as I went out into the brighter lights and the

"Desert." I often had no idea where "almost certainly" I often went nowhere. We can tell nothing. There were people about fine for us to see. I think that the stars are their flowers," he concluded happily.

"And there are always the priest's roses," I said—but I think that the whole race of lovers spoke the words in my ear.



AT THE LAST

By Archibald Sullivan

WHEN I am dead and lie with folded hands
Across my breast,
Suppose a bird's glad song should reach my grave,
And break my rest?

When I am dead and lie with curtained eyes
Too dark to see,
Suppose a moonbeam silvers through the earth,
And rouses me?

When I am dead and this my heart is still,
Suppose above
You pass my grave with listless, lonely feet,
And wake my love?



PA'S INDIFFERENCE

YOUNG WHOOPLER (*wildly*)—Sir, if you do not permit me to marry your daughter I will hang myself!

OLD GRIMM (*calmly*)—I don't care a continental what you do, young man, just so long as you don't hang around here!

whom I believed. I only know that in the moment when the fairy prince turned to take his wife in his arms I heard a little thin, pricking staccato from among the roses at the door.

"Back with the moon," indeed it said. "I've come all the way to find you!"

And there, her gray round red spot on white

And so when Rosemary came here I followed her—almost to my own home home. And then you sent *hat letter for me—to I knew th*

ON CONTRAST

By Arthur Symons

THE part of London I used to know best is the part that lies between the Temple and Piccadilly, and some of it no longer exists. When the Strand was widened Holywell street, one of the oldest and quaintest streets in London, was pulled down; Wych street went, too, and Clare Market, and many dingy twisting lanes which could well be spared. But I deeply regret Holywell street, and when I tell strangers about it, it seems to me that they can never know London now.

I suppose many people will soon forget that narrow lane with its overhanging wooden fronts, like the houses at Coventry; or they will remember it only for its surreptitious shop-windows on one side of the street. I remember it for its book-shops. Perhaps I liked the quays at Paris even better: it was Paris, and there was the river, and Notre-Dame, and it was the left bank. But nowhere else, in no other city, was there a corner so made for book-fanciers. Those dingy shops with their stalls open to the street, nearly all on the right, the respectable side, as you walked west—how seldom did I keep my resolution to walk past them with unaverted eyes, how rarely did I resist their temptations. Half the books I possess were bought second-hand in Holywell street, and what bargains I have made out of the fourpenny box! On the hottest days there was shade there, and excuse for lounging. It was a little shady paradise for book-lovers.

It never occurred to me that any street so old could seem worth pulling down; but the improvements came,

and that and the less interesting streets near, where the Globe Theatre was (I thought it no loss) had of course to go; and Dane's Inn went, which was never a genuine "inn," but had some of the pleasant, genuine dreariness; and Clare Market was swallowed up, and I believe Drury Lane is getting new furbished and losing its old savor of squalor; and Aldwych is there, with its beautiful name, but itself so big and obvious that I confess, with my recollection of what was there before, I can never find my way in it.

Striking westward, my course generally led me through Leicester Square. The foreign quarter of London radiates from Leicester Square, or winds inward to that point as to a centre. Its foreign aspect, the fact that it was the park of Soho, interested me. In Leicester Square, and in all the tiny streets running into it, you are never in the really normal London; it is an escape, a sort of shame-faced and sordid and yet irresistible reminder of Paris and Italy. The little restaurants all round brought me local color before I had seen Italy; I still see with pleasure the straw-covered bottles and the strings of macaroni in the undusted windows. The foreign people you see are not always desirable people; but do not their shapes and colors come as a relief to you after the uniform shapes and colors of English make?

I have always been apt to look on the world as a puppet-show, and all the men and women merely players, whose wires we do not see working. There is a passage in one of Keats's letters which expresses just what I

felt. "May there not," he says, "be superior beings, amused with any graceful, though instinctive, attitude my mind may fall into, as I am entertained with the alertness of the stoat or the anxiety of the deer?" Is there not, in our aspect toward one another, something inevitably automatic? Do we see, in the larger part of those fellow-creatures whom our eyes rest on, more than a smile, a gesture, a passing or a coming forward? Are they more real to us than the actors on a stage, the quivering phantoms of a cinematograph? With their own private existence we have nothing to do; do they not, so far as we are concerned, exist in part at least to be a spectacle to us, to convey to us a sense of life, change, beauty, variety, necessity? The spectacle of human life is not only for the gods' eyes, but for ours; it is ours in so far as we can apprehend it, and our pleasure and satisfaction here are largely dependent on the skill with which we have trained ourselves to that instinctive, delighted apprehension. To a few here and there we can come closer; we can make them, by some illusion of the affections, seem more real to us. But as for all the rest, let us be content to admire, to wonder, to see the use and beauty and curiosity of them, and to intrude no further into their destinies.

It was for their very obvious qualities of illusion that I liked to watch the people in the foreign quarter. They were like prisoners there, thriving, perhaps, but discontented; none of them light-hearted, as they would have been in their own country; grudgingly at home. And there was much piteous false show among them, soiled, sordid ostentation, a little of what we see in the older songs of Yvette Guilbert.

London was for a long time my supreme sensation, and to roam in the streets, especially after the lamps were lighted, my chief pleasure. I had no motive in it, merely the desire to get out of doors, and to be among people and lights; to get out of myself. When

I was living alone in the Temple that desire came over me almost every night. The plunge through the Middle Temple gateway was like the swimmer's plunge into rough water; I got just that "cool shock" as I went outside into the brighter lights and the movement. I often had no idea where I was going. I often went nowhere. I walked, and there were people about me.

I lived in Fountain Court for ten years, and I thought then, and I think still, that it is the most beautiful place in London. Dutch friends have told me that the Temple is like a little Dutch town, and that as they enter from Fleet street into Middle Temple Lane they can fancy themselves at The Hague. Dutchmen are happy if they have much that can remind them of Middle Temple Lane.

There is a moment when you are in Fleet street; you have forced your way through the long Strand, along those narrow pavements, in a continual coming and going of hurried people, with the continual rumbling of wheels in the road, the swaying heights of omnibuses beside you, distracting your eyes, the dust, clatter, confusion, heat, bewilderment of that thoroughfare; and suddenly you go under a low doorway, where large wooden doors and a smaller side-door stand open, and you are suddenly in quiet. The roar has dropped as the roar of the sea drops if you go in at your door and shut it behind you. At night, when one had to knock, and so waited, and was admitted with a nice formality, it was sometimes almost startling. I have never felt any quiet in solitary places so much as the quiet of that contrast: Fleet street and the Temple.

No wheels could come nearer to me in Fountain Court than Middle Temple Lane, but I liked to hear sometimes at night a faint clattering, only just audible, which I knew was the sound of a cab on the Embankment. The County Council, steadily ruining London with the persistence of an organic disease, will no doubt soon turn the Embankment into a gangway for electric trams;

but when I knew it, it was a quiet, almost secluded place where people sauntered and leaned over to look into the water, and where, at night, the policemen would walk with considerably averted head past the slumbering heaps of tired rags on the seats.

The gates on the Embankment shut early, but I often came home by the river, and I could hardly tear myself away from looking over that gray, harsh parapet. The Neva reminds me a little of the Thames, though it rushes more wildly, and at night is more like a sea, with swift lights crossing it. But I do not know the river of any great capital which has the fascination of our river.

If you would see London steadily from the point where its aspect is finest, go on a night when there has been rain to the footpath which crosses Hungerford Bridge by the side of the railway-track. The river seems to have suddenly become a lake; under the black arches of Waterloo Bridge there are reflections of golden fire, multiplying arch beyond arch, in a lovely tangle. The Surrey side is dark, with tall, vague buildings rising out of the mud on which a little water crawls; is it the water that moves, or the shadows? A few empty barges or steamers lie in solid patches on the water near the bank; and a stationary sky-sign, hideous where it defaces the night, turns in the water to wavering bars of rosy orange. The buildings on the Embankment rise up, walls of soft grayness with squares of lighted windows, which make patterns across them. They tremble in the mist, their shapes flicker; it seems as if a breath would blow out their lights and leave them bodiless husks in the wind. From one of the tallest chimneys a reddish smoke floats and twists like a flag. Below, the Embankment curves toward Cleopatra's Needle; you see the curve of the wall, as the lamps light it, leaving the obelisk in shadow, and falling faintly on the gray mud in the river. Just that corner has a mysterious air, as if secluded, in the heart of a pageant; I know not what makes

it quite so tragic and melancholy. The aspect of the night, the aspect of London, pricked out in points of fire against an enveloping darkness, is as beautiful as any sunset or any mountain; I do not know any more beautiful aspect. And, here as always in London, it is the atmosphere that makes the picture, an atmosphere like Turner, revealing every form through the ecstasy of its color.

It is Whistler who has created the Thames for most people; but the Thames existed before Whistler, and will exist after the County Council. I remember hearing Claude Monet say, at the time when he came over to the Savoy Hotel, year by year, to paint Waterloo Bridge from its windows, that he could not understand why an English painter ever left London. I felt almost as if the river belonged to the Temple: its presence there, certainly, was part of its mysterious anomaly, a fragment of old London, walled and guarded in that corner of land between Fleet street and the Thames.

II

As you come back into London from the country, out of air into smoke, rattling level with the chimney-tops, and looking down into narrow gulf swarming with men and machines, you are as if seized in a gigantic grip. First comes a splendid but disheartening sense of force, compelling you to admire it, then a desperate sense of helplessness. London seems a vast ant-heap, and you are one more ant dropped on the heap. You are stunned, and then you come to yourself, and your thought revolts against the material weight which is crushing you. What a huge futility it all seems, this human ant-heap, this crawling and hurrying and sweating and building and bearing burdens and never resting all day long and never bringing any labor to an end. After the fields and the sky London seems trivial, a thing artificially made, in which people

work at senseless toils, for idle and imaginary ends. Labor in the fields is regular, sane, inevitable as the labor of the earth with its roots. You are in your place in the world, between the grass and the clouds, really alive and living as natural a life as the beasts. In London men work as if in darkness, scarcely seeing their own hands as they work, and not knowing the meaning of their labor. They wither and dwindle, forgetting or not knowing that it was ever a pleasant thing merely to be alive and in the air. They are all doing things for other people, making useless "improvements," always perfecting the achievement of material results with newly made tools. They are making things cheaper, more immediate in effect, of the latest modern make. It is all a hurry, a leveling downward, an automobilization of the mind.

And their pleasures are as their labors. In the country you have but to walk or look out of your window and you are in the midst of beautiful and living things: a tree, a dimly jeweled frog, a bird in flight. Every natural pleasure is about you; you may walk or ride or skate or swim, or merely sit still and be at rest. But in London you must invent pleasures and then toil after them. The pleasures of London are more exhausting than its toils. No stone-breaker on the roads works so hard or martyrs his flesh so cruelly as the actress or the woman of fashion. No one in London does what he wants to do, or goes where he wants to go. It is a suffering to go to any theatre, any concert. There are even people who go to lectures. And all this continual self-sacrifice is done for "amusement." It is astonishing.

London was once habitable, in spite of itself. The machines have killed it. The old, habitable London exists no longer. Charles Lamb could not live in this mechanical city, out of which everything old and human has been driven by wheels and hammers and the fluids of noise and speed. When will his affectionate phrase, "the sweet security of streets," ever be used again

of London? No one will take a walk down Fleet street any more, no one will shed tears of joy in the "motley Strand," no one will be leisurable any more, or turn over old books at a stall, or talk with friends at the street corner. Noise and evil smells have filled the streets like tunnels in daylight; it is a pain to walk in the midst of all these hurrying and clattering machines; the multitude of humanity, that "bath" into which Baudelaire loved to plunge, is scarcely discernible, it is secondary to the machines; it is only in a machine that you can escape the machines. London, that was vast and smoky and loud, now stinks and reverberates; to live in it is to live in the hollow of a clangling bell, to breathe its air is to breathe the foulness of modern progress.

London as it is now is the wreck and moral of civilization. We are more civilized every day, every day we can go more quickly and more uncomfortably wherever we want to go. We live by touching buttons and ringing bells, a new purely practical magic sets us in communication with the ends of the earth. We can have abominable mockeries of the arts of music and of speech whizzing in our ears out of metal mouths. We have outdone the wildest prophetic buffooneries of Villiers de l'Isle Adam, whose "celestial bill-sticking" may be seen nightly, defacing the majesty of the river; any gramophone can give us the equivalent of his "chemical analysis of the last breath." The plausible and insidious telephone aids us and intrudes upon us, taking away our liberty from us, and leaving every Englishman's house his castle no longer, but a kind of whispering gallery, open to the hum of every voice. There is hardly a street left in London where one can talk with open windows by day and sleep with open windows by night. We are tunneled under until our houses rock, we are shot through holes in the earth if we want to cross London; even the last liberty of Hampstead Heath is about to be taken from us by railways.

London has civilized itself into the likeness of a steam roundabout at a fair; it goes clattering and turning, to the sound of a jubilant hurdy-gurdy; round and round, always on the same track but always faster; and the children astride its wooden horses think they are getting to the world's end.

It is the machines, more than anything else, that have done it. Men and women, as they passed each other, in the street or on the road, saw and took cognizance of each other, human being of human being. The creatures that we see now in the machines are hardly to be called human, so are they disfigured out of all recognition, in order that they may go fast enough not to see anything themselves. Does anyone any longer walk? If I walk I meet no one walking, and I cannot wonder at it, for what I meet is an uproar, and a whizz, and a leap past me, and a blinding cloud of dust, and a machine on which scarecrows perch is disappearing at the end of the road. The verbs to loll, to lounge, to dawdle, to loiter, the verbs precious to Walt Whitman, precious to every lover of men and of himself, are losing their currency; they will be marked "O" for obsolete in the dictionaries of the future. All that poetry which Walt Whitman found in things merely because they were alive will fade out of existence like the red Indians. It will live on for some time yet in the

country, here and there in the country where the railway has not yet smeared its poisonous trail over the soil; but in London there will soon be no need of men; there will be nothing but machines.

There was a time when it was enough merely to be alive, and to be in London. Every morning promised an adventure; something or someone might be waiting at the corner of the next street; it was difficult to stay indoors because there were so many people in the streets. I still think, after seeing most of the capitals of Europe, that there is no capital in Europe where so many beautiful women are to be seen as in London. Warsaw comes near, for rarity, not for number. The streets and the omnibuses were always alive with beauty or with something strange. In London anything may happen. "Adventures to the adventurous!" says somebody in "Contarini Fleming." But who can look as high as the uneasy faces on a motor-omnibus, who can look under the hoods and goggles in a motor-car? The roads are too noisy now for any charm of expression to be seen on the pavements. The women are shouting to each other, straining their ears to hear. They want to get their shopping done and to get into a motor-car or a motor-omnibus.

Could another Charles Lamb create a new London?



CITING A CASE

OLIVE—Do you believe that the quick-lunch-counter habit has a bad effect on the heart?

VIOLET—It had on Tom's heart. He fell in love with a pretty waitress.



HARD LUCK

MR. DASH—Mother says that she wants to be cremated.
DASH—Just my luck! I haven't a match with me.

A CORNER IN BACH

By Montague Glass

DINGLEWOOD, as everybody knows who plays golf, tennis, polo or even table-stakes poker, is the resort of wealth and fashion. In the crowd of home-faring suburbanites at the New Jersey Midland station its young men are to be distinguished by a fine coat of tan and some golf-sticks, and their talk also is of foursomes, stymies and hazards.

Their elders puff heavily into the club car of the four-twenty express and con the tabulated figures of the financial page. Then they growl brief comments to one another, on the unseasonable weather, the abominable Scotch at the club and—damn a bear market anyway!—the latest railroad merger.

But of the things of the spirit, literature is dismissed in their speech as rotten, or lauded as rattling good. Pictorial art, the sort displayed in the illustrated magazines, which is their only gallery, passes at a glance without remark, while classical music is ignored entirely.

It must not be supposed, however, that all of Dinglewood's elect maintained this low plane of culture. There was Mrs. Joel Grosvenor, for instance—yes, and Mrs. Robert Kenneson. In the social scheme of Dinglewood the wife of a captain of industry takes precedence over the wife of a stock-jobber, just as five millions exceed one million.

Bearing this in mind, who was it put through the big K. T. & I. deal? Why, Joel Grosvenor, of course. And whom did he let in on the ground floor? Equally of course, his brother-in-law, Robert Kenneson. *Ergo* and *propter*

hoc, Mrs. Grosvenor was easily the leader among the elect of Dinglewood, with Mrs. Kenneson a close second, as Kenneson himself would have put it. Too stout for tennis and golf, Mrs. Grosvenor found herself being forced out of the social running.

Therefore she had recourse to music, and established the Bach Society with the assistance of Mrs. Kenneson, who suffered a slight myopia and invariably plowed up the turf to the utter despair of the "greens" committee.

Their project was acclaimed and adopted by at least a dozen influential matrons of Dinglewood, whose husbands had hinted that it might be a good thing to cater to Mrs. Grosvenor and Mrs. Kenneson, especially during the present uncertain state of the market.

"Joel," said Mrs. Grosvenor at dinner one night, "I want to speak to you about the Bach Society."

Grosvenor laid down his knife and fork and lifted his hand in protest.

"It's no use, my dear," he interrupted. "Poker's my game, and you can't teach an old dog new tricks."

"But it isn't a card game," she insisted; "it's the name of a famous musician, John Sebastian Bach, and the object of the society is to promote a greater interest in serious music among the people of Dinglewood."

She unconsciously quoted the rector's address which opened the first meeting of the society, and at the word "promote" Grosvenor pricked up his ears.

"In my experience," he remarked, "promotion schemes are dangerous and need money—lots of it."

"We do need some money," she continued, "and that's what I'm coming to right now. We're going to give a concert."

"Home talent?" he asked.

Both Grosvenor and his wife were born and raised in the rural districts of Eastern Pennsylvania. In the twenty years that had intervened since they had left their native village, however, Grosvenor had been too busy to forget the fact, while Mrs. Grosvenor had been equally busy trying not to remember it.

"Home talent!" she echoed in disgusted tones. "My dear Joel, when will you learn to express yourself intelligibly?"

Grosvenor looked crushed and fumbled in his breast pocket for his cheque-book.

"How much?" he blurted out, with fountain-pen poised in his right hand.

"Everybody will contribute something," she went on, "and fifty dollars will be quite enough for the present. We're going to have von Bielitz, the pianist, and perhaps an orchestra. You see, it'll be for the benefit of the hospital." She laid a hand on his arm. "I want the thing to be a success," she murmured.

"And it shall be," he said emphatically. "I'll see the bunch on the four-twenty tomorrow, and touch 'em on the spot."

Grosvenor climbed aboard the four-twenty, the next afternoon, a good ten minutes before train time. He found Simeon B. Porteous, the president of the Borough of Dinglewood, alone in the club car.

Porteous emerged from a perusal of the closing prices to growl a curt greeting.

"Did ye ever see such a market as this?" he croaked.

"Lots of 'em," Grosvenor replied; "so forget it and listen to me."

He drew up a wicker chair in confidential proximity to the borough president.

"The John S. Bach Association is going to give a concert for the benefit of the hospital," he announced; "tick-

ets, ten dollars. How many shall I put you down for?"

"John S. Bach Association!" Porteous exclaimed. "Since when are you in politics?"

"It isn't me. It's Mrs. Grosvenor," the other elucidated. "Shall we say five?"

"Hold on, there!" Porteous interrupted. "Who is this John S. Bach, anyway?"

Grosvenor lit a cigar and puffed away in a businesslike manner.

"You can search me," he said briskly. "Mrs. Grosvenor can tell you all about him. They've started a society and named it after him. Going to begin with a concert and hire a Dutch pianist, probably a friend of Bach's."

"Well, you know, I'm up for re-election this fall," Porteous said doubtfully, "and if it gets about that this fellow Bach touched me for fifty, it may queer me with the Irish vote on the other side of the tracks."

"Leave that to me," Grosvenor replied, "and I'll see that it goes no further."

So Porteous subscribed for five tickets, as did old Satterthwaite, who strolled in a moment later. Before the train left Jersey City, Grosvenor had collected the neat sum of a thousand dollars, and from the younger men, who arrived on the last connecting ferry, he raised a couple of hundred more.

Kenneson and he compared notes at the Dinglewood Club that evening, and found that between them the Bach Society was enriched to the tune of almost two thousand dollars.

"And what does Henrietta propose to do with all this money?" Grosvenor asked. "She's managing the society, so Sophie tells me."

"She says the Dutch pianist, von Bielitz, is good for a thousand," he replied, "and the orchestra will eat up the rest."

Grosvenor whistled.

"Of course we're all fond of music," he said, "but if Henrietta runs things in this high-toned way, where does the hospital come in?"

The Dinglewood Memorial Hospital was Grosvenor's pet hobby, and whenever anything was broached to raise funds for it, he took off his coat and hustled, as he himself expressed it. Heretofore there had been gymkhanas, old-fashioned country fairs and other outdoor amusements, which, after the disbursement of advertising charges and fees for professional performers, usually showed a net profit of about \$22.41.

"These hospital benefits, you know, have been awful frosts in the past," he declared. "And it's meant dig, dig, dig, on the part of the financial committee, to keep the place running at all."

Here they were interrupted by the entrance of young Venable Satterthwaite, who greeted them uproariously.

"How's the John S. Bach Association coming along?" he asked cheerfully, and passed on without waiting for an answer.

Vennie Satterthwaite was the only son of Satterthwaite, of Satterthwaite & Poor, the bond concern, whose junior partner's surname so emphatically belied the firm's rating. Venable hurried through the smoking-room in which Grosvenor and Kenneson were sitting, and his arrival at the piano upstairs was signalized by a strong baritone proclaiming:

"What more could a poor girl doo, oo-oo,
oo-oo?
Ah fried him oysters, fed him kidney stoo,
oo-o, oo-oo!"

Kenneson struck the table in an access of enthusiasm born of a new discovery.

"By George! he exclaimed, "Vennie's musical. He can probably help us out."

He touched a bell and despatched the servant for young Satterthwaite, who responded immediately.

"Don't blame you a bit for wanting me to quit," he announced. "So you needn't apologize."

Grosvenor waved him to a seat and the servant produced the club Scotch without further direction.

"Not at all, Vennie," Kenneson

said. "Always delighted to hear you sing. You were a member of your glee club, weren't you?"

"Sure thing," Vennie replied. "Lehigh '04, and say, talking about John Sebastian Bach, they're nuts on old John up at Bethlehem."

He made an eloquent gesture.

"You ought to hear that stuff of his they play there," he said. "Oh, awful! If Mrs. Grosvenor expects to put it on at the hospital concert, you can count me out."

Kenneson and Grosvenor exchanged significant glances.

"Mrs. Kenneson is going to have a pianist called von Bielitz," Grosvenor said.

"Von Bielitz!" Satterthwaite echoed. "Why, man, he's the biggest bull in the piano situation; he'll charge a thousand dollars and put 'em all to sleep, in the bargain."

"Well, it's for the benefit of the hospital, anyway," Kenneson murmured.

Grosvenor looked up.

"Seems to me it's for the benefit of von Bielitz," he said drily.

"Why, you can get up a cracking good vaudeville bill for three hundred," young Satterthwaite interrupted, "and for a couple of hundred more we can have a dance and a hand-out afterwards."

Kenneson shook his head.

"I suggested the dance part," he replied, "but Mrs. Kenneson called it undignified and inconsistent."

Young Satterthwaite rose, whereat both Grosvenor and Kenneson pushed back their chairs.

"Glad to be of any assistance," said Satterthwaite as they parted. "Let me know if you want me."

II

BREAKFAST at the Kennesons was ordered to accord with the time-table of the New Jersey Midland Railway. It was served sufficiently remote from train time to ensure Kenneson's prompt arrival at the station; and since his progress from his home to the

depot was conditional upon the state of the roads, the health—so to speak—of his automobile, or even the sobriety of his coachman, the appearance of the food on the table was always more or less problematical.

Mrs. Kenneson's habit of breakfasting with her husband was a survival of their early married life. She contrived to be neatly dressed for this occasion, because it pleased her husband, in the same degree that he was irritated if she wore a peignoir.

On the morning after the canvass of the club car, the roads were muddy and the automobile out of commission. Hence Kenneson breakfasted early, to the frustration of his wife's toilet. She threw on a silk dressing-gown and, thus arrayed, was pouring out a cup of coffee for her husband, when he broached the subject of the Bach Society.

"Seems to me, Henrietta," he said, as querulously as a mouthful of toast permitted, "that a thousand dollars is a big sum to pay this von Bielitz fellow."

"If you think you can get him for less," she said mildly, "you're welcome to try. In fact, we'd be glad to have you do it."

He gulped his coffee with one eye peeping over the edge of the cup, straight at the peignoir.

"Won't anyone else do?" he inquired.

Mrs. Kenneson smiled.

"You see, von Bielitz is the greatest interpreter of Bach," she explained.

"Suppose he is," Kenneson said. "Vennie Satterthwaite can speak German."

"What has *that* to do with it?" she asked.

"Well, if you want von Bielitz to interpret Bach," he continued, "Vennie Satterthwaite can do it. I take it this fellow Bach is a Dutchman, isn't he?"

Mrs. Kenneson laid down her knife and fork.

"Robert Kenneson," she began, "for the benefit of you, Joel and the other subscribers, let me tell you once and for all that John Sebastian Bach,

for whom we've named this society, has been dead—stone-cold dead—over a hundred and fifty years; that he wrote great music, and that von Bielitz plays his compositions better than any other living pianist; *that* is why we want him for our concert."

Kenneson rose from the table.

"So be it, then," he said, in parting. "Grosvenor and I will get a line on von Bielitz and see what we can do."

At the station Vennie Satterthwaite stood talking with Grosvenor as Kenneson jumped out of his wagon.

"Well?" they cried in unison.

Kenneson cocked his cigar at a rakish angle.

"It's all right," he said. "Mrs. Kenneson has left it all to us."

They entered the club car and went immediately into executive session.

"In the first place," said Kenneson, "he's dead."

"Who's dead?" Grosvenor cried.

"Bach," Kenneson replied. "But don't be shocked. It happened a hundred and fifty years ago. Henrietta instructs me to tell you that he was a kind of musical Shakespeare, and it seems that von Bielitz has a corner on his output."

They nodded gravely.

"So nobody else will do," he went on, "and the next thing is to see von Bielitz and find out what his lowest figures are." He turned to Satterthwaite. "Did you ever hear von Bielitz play?" he exclaimed.

"My sister took me once," said Vennie. "He is a big fellow with a fine bunch of hair."

Grosvenor was turning over the advertising sheets of a popular magazine.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Here's his picture. You're right about the hair, Vennie."

He handed the magazine to Kenneson. Von Bielitz's portrait embellished an advertisement of the Harmonicon self-playing piano and accompanied a testimonial signed in facsimile, which read as follows:

TO THE HARMONICON COMPANY.

GENTLEMEN: I have heard your new "Indicator" records of my interpretation of

Bach. The result is well-nigh miraculous. My friends cannot distinguish my own playing from that of your wonderful instrument. Wishing you all success, I remain,

Faithfully yours,

FELIX VON BIELITZ.

Grosvenor perused the advertisement carefully and sat back in silence for a few minutes.

"Look here, Satterthwaite," he said at length, "can't we frame up some plan to get rid of von Bielitz?"

"That's just what I've been thinking," Satterthwaite replied. "Did you ever attend one of the Harmonicon Company's recitals?"

Grosvenor and Kenneson shook their heads.

"Well, they have them two or three times a week," he continued, "and if it wasn't for the way the Johnnie who operates the piano moves his legs, you might think he was playing the thing by hand."

He paused and lit a cigar.

"Couldn't you arrange to hide his feet with some palms and potted plants along the front of the stage?" Grosvenor asked.

"Certainly you could," Satterthwaite replied, "but how about his head?"

"That's so," Grosvenor muttered; "and I suppose Henrietta and Sophie, to say nothing of your sister and yourself, have seen von Bielitz hundreds of times."

The train was drawing into the Jersey City terminus, and they dispersed, making an appointment for the club that evening.

"Do you know this fellow, von Bielitz?" said Kenneson to his wife at dinner that evening.

"Why, I've heard him play any number of times," she replied, "but I've never met him."

"What sort of looking chap is he?" Kenneson asked.

"He's tall—er—rather tall—I think," she answered hesitatingly, and then brightening up, concluded the sentence with a rush, "oh, and lots of hair."

Kenneson hid a smile with his hand.

"Is he clean-shaven?"

"I think so," said Mrs. Kenneson;

"or perhaps he has a small mustache. The fact is I've forgotten exactly how he looks."

Simultaneously, Grosvenor was testing Mrs. Grosvenor's impressions of von Bielitz's personal appearance, and with similar results, so that when Satterthwaite arrived at the club he found Kenneson and Grosvenor boisterously comparing notes.

"There seems to be a difference of opinion about this fellow von Bielitz," said Kenneson to Satterthwaite. "Tell us again what your impressions are."

"Well, as nearly as I can remember," Satterthwaite replied, "he's a big fellow with a bunch of hair."

"What color?" Grosvenor asked.

"You can search me," said Satterthwaite. "Black or brown, I guess."

"Was he clean-shaven?" Grosvenor went on.

"Now, let's see," Satterthwaite hesitated. "To tell you the honest truth, I don't remember."

"Don't let that upset you," Grosvenor broke in. "As a matter of fact, I don't believe there's a single person in Dinglewood who does."

He puffed away on his cigar for a minute.

"I took a look in at the Harmonicon shop this afternoon," he went on, "and of the men who operate their machines there are at least six tall Dutchmen, with long hair. How's that?"

"By George!" cried Kenneson, "you're all right."

"And what's more," Grosvenor continued, "I've made a deal with the Harmonicon people, for the hire of one of their self-playing Wagner grands, concert size. They've agreed to furnish a long-haired operator, with all of von Bielitz's Bach repertoire, for a hundred dollars, f. o. b. Dinglewood, at any date we fix."

III

FOR the ensuing three weeks Grosvenor suffered every trial attendant on the business of an impresario. The source of his tribulation, however, was

not the virtuoso he represented, but his wife and Mrs. Kenneson.

When he hired the opera house they insisted on the armory of the local militia company. But Grosvenor was taking no chances with a temporary platform erected on saw horses, as was customary when performances occurred at the armory. Nevertheless, Mrs. Grosvenor declared that a theatre devoted to the *mise-en-scène* of "Only a Mill Girl; or, Broadway After Dark," for one night only, would desecrate the very name of Bach.

"Look here, Satterthwaite," said Grosvenor, a few days before the concert, "this Bach Society is driving me insane."

"What's the matter now?" Satterthwaite asked.

"Why, I have it all fixed up, to sneak the Harmonicon Grand through the stage door of the opera house immediately before the performance and whisk it out again as soon as the show is over. And now Mrs. Grosvenor insists that we hire the armory.

Satterthwaite shook his head.

"Impossible," he said gravely. "The armory won't do at all. It has no acoustic properties. Tell that to Mrs. Grosvenor and see if she doesn't agree with me."

"Good boy!" Grosvenor ejaculated, slapping him on the back. "Come around to dinner this evening."

"Can't do it."

"You've got to," Grosvenor insisted.

"Why?"

"I'd never be able to remember that word," said Grosvenor, "and even if I made a memorandum of it, I couldn't pronounce it. You'll simply have to explain it to Mrs. Grosvenor, yourself."

So Vennie went to dinner at the Grosvenors' and Mrs. Grosvenor saw the point immediately.

"I think the way you men have arranged this concert," she said enthusiastically, "is perfectly splendid."

"The credit belongs to old Grosvenor," Satterthwaite replied modestly. "He made all the negotiations."

Grosvenor looked down his nose, and

what he believed to be a smile spread over his features,

"And I suppose I'll meet von Bielitz on the night of the concert?" said Mrs. Grosvenor, clasping her hands. "How very interesting, to be sure."

"I don't know about that," Grosvenor interposed hastily. "He's very eccentric. His manager told me that he insists on being absolutely alone on the platform during his recital. So that does away with your orchestra."

Mrs. Grosvenor sighed. She did so love to see the conductor's gyrations.

"And what's more extraordinary," Grosvenor said, with a sink-or-swim expression on his face, "he insists upon being hidden by palms or potted plants, especially his feet."

"How very remarkable!" Mrs. Grosvenor exclaimed.

"He has such big feet, you know," Satterthwaite interrupted.

"Why, you've no idea what cranks these pianists are," Grosvenor went on. "I read of one the other day—Paderoski, I think—who always ate a baked apple an hour before he performed."

"I read that too," Mrs. Grosvenor said, "but it referred to De Reszké."

"One of those Dutch pianists, anyway," Grosvenor replied. "And now, Vennie, I think we'll go down to the club, if Mrs. Grosvenor will excuse us."

On their way down they picked up Kenneson with a large package under his arm.

"Hello, Kenneson!" Satterthwaite called. "What have you been doing—shopping?"

"Posters," said Kenneson.

"Posters!" Grosvenor echoed. "Here's where we get into trouble. I wanted to talk to you about them before you ordered any."

Kenneson winked eloquently.

"Leave that to me," he replied. "If this fellow von Bielitz can get into us on the strength of these posters, he's a wonder."

He unrolled the bundle and held one of the placards against an adjacent fence. It was printed in blue characters on a white background, and read as follows:

FELIX VON BIELITZ'S

Interpretation of

BACHDinglewood Opera House, Wednesday,
8.30 P.M.For the Benefit of the Hospital, under the Auspices of
THE BACH SOCIETY

Reserved Seats \$10

Admission \$2

Wagner Piano Used. Camages at Ten

"You'll notice that no reference is made to von Bielitz not being present in his proper person," said Kenneson.

Grosvenor looked critically at the poster.

"For a man that's been dead a hundred and fifty years," he grunted, "seems to me you've featured Bach unduly!"

"Of course it doesn't suit *you*," Kenneson retorted. "You'd kick if the angel Gabriel himself composed it."

"Excuse my ignorance of theology," broke in Satterthwaite, the peacemaker, "but is he the recording angel? If not, I guess this matter doesn't concern him at all."

Then they passed into the club and settled the details over two rounds of highballs.

IV

At length the night of the concert arrived. Grosvenor had not gone to the city at all that day, but awaited in the opera house the advent of the Harmonicon Grand which had been sent from New York in a four-horse van.

When it eventually drew up at the stage door, he superintended the unhitching of the team and had them put up at an adjacent livery stable.

To him fell the delicate task of dissuading the driver and his assistants from immediately unloading the instrument. This he did by supplying them with sufficient beer for their entertainment, but not too much for their sobriety.

At half-past seven Satterthwaite

and Kenneson drove to the station in Kenneson's machine to receive the operator. They reached the tracks just as the train was pulling in, and when they arrived on the station platform, the interpreter of von Bielitz's interpretation of Bach was descending from the smoker. He was followed by a short, thick-set youth, bearing a bundle of black, oblong boxes which contained the music rolls.

The operator was a tall, slender person of about thirty-five, and as much like von Bielitz's published portraits as, in all probability, von Bielitz was unlike them.

"By George" said Kenneson, "he has enough hair for two von Bielitzes."

Satterthwaite approached him politely.

"*Guten Abend*," he said in purest Hanoverian.

"Huh?" snorted the pseudo von Bielitz.

"You're from the Harmonicon Company?" Kenneson broke in.

"Sure thing!" was the reply. "Here's me layout."

He indicated the boxes borne by his assistant.

"*Sprechen Sie Deutsch?*" Satterthwaite asked, not to be divested of his German-speaking opportunity.

"Cheese it, young feller," said the operator, "I ain't no Dutchman. Speak United States."

Kenneson led them to his automobile.

"We're going to the Dinglewood House first," he announced, "to talk it over."

They drew up at the hotel in a few minutes and very solemnly proceeded to a private room back of the bar. The alleged von Bielitz took old ale with a dash of red pepper, and while he consumed it they explained their plan to him very carefully. Whatever scruples he may have had were overcome by a ten-dollar bill with the promise of another ten at the conclusion of the concert.

The thick-set youth, termed Briggsy by the operator, was provided with a black windsor tie from the Bee Hive

dry-goods store, opposite, and Satterthwaite borrowed a comb from the bartender. Two dollars prompted Briggsy to shampoo vigorously his oily locks, and after a thorough drying they were arranged by Satterthwaite in what he deemed to be an artistic manner.

"Now we're all fixed," Kenneson said, "and for heaven's sake, don't open your mouths, either of you."

At eight o'clock the driver and his assistants unloaded the Harmonicon Grand and placed it at the "prompt" side of the stage, after which the curtain was lowered.

Kenneson, Grosvenor and Satterthwaite had stripped bare their greenhouses so that with the aid of the local florist, the opera house stage was completely masked by a profusion of potted plants.

The auditorium filled promptly, and by the appointed hour not a vacant seat remained in the house. It was, as the rector put it, a gratifying testimonial to the awakening of Dinglewood musical taste.

Grosvenor constituted his fellow-conspirators a committee of two to block all access to the stage by Mrs. Grosvenor, Mrs. Kenneson or other inquisitive subscribers. Sufficient time elapsed after the audience was seated to provoke some tentative hand-clapping, so that when the pseudo von Bielitz appeared before the curtain, the applause swelled into an uproarious ovation. His bowing acknowledgment was a marvel of foreign grace, and the feminine half of the audience sighed in unison as he strode into the wings.

After the curtain went up, all that was visible of the performer was the top of his head, which rose, chrysanthemum-like, above the wealth of palms and fernery.

His first number took the form of an intricate fugue which was rendered with such virtuosity that even Simeon B. Porteous became enthusiastic.

"That man's a wonder," he exclaimed to his neighbor. "He certainly can do things to the piano."

An appreciation of Bach, however,

is not to be cultivated in a single night, and before half the programme was performed Porteous's head sank on his protruding shirt bosom and he fell peacefully to snoring, in company with old Satterthwaite and the rector. The rest of the audience dwindled one by one, until only half of its original number remained.

It lacked but twenty minutes of the conclusion of the recital, and Briggsy, who had been sitting listlessly in one of the proscenium boxes, closely guarded by young Satterthwaite, straightened up visibly as the operator started on the last number but one. His feet tapped the leg of the chair in rhythmic enjoyment of the melody, and when Satterthwaite nudged him into silence, it could be detected that all those in the audience still awake, were continuing Briggsy's tattoo.

"Great, ain't it?" he whispered to Satterthwaite.

"Shut up!" Satterthwaite hissed, and wondered that a person of Briggsy's evident low taste should evince so keen an enjoyment of classical music.

At the conclusion of the number the audience broke into applause that, in volume and force, testified to its complete sincerity. Satterthwaite and Briggsy were clapping with the rest, as Kenneson entered.

"Say," he cried, "that fellow Bach could write some pretty up-to-date stuff."

Briggsy grinned but said nothing.

"Henrietta and I heard that last week at a roof-garden," Kenneson went on.

"Come off," Satterthwaite jeered, "the millennium hasn't arrived yet. Bach at a roof-garden!"

The pseudo von Bielitz appeared in front of the curtain and bowed and bowed again, but nothing would appease the audience until he repeated the number.

During its second rendition, Kenneson stayed in the box with Briggsy and Satterthwaite.

"Say, Vennie," he declared solemnly, "I know I heard that stuff at a roof-garden last week."

Satterthwaite jeered again, and Kenneson grew heated.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he cried, "I'll bet you a tenner I'm right."

"You're on," said Satterthwaite, as the last number commenced. It was another fugue and its conclusion, marred by the rustling of departing auditors, was signalized by a brief, polite handclapping. A faithful band of feminine enthusiasts remained, however, and they stood in the orchestra pit and continued to applaud until the long-haired operator had appeared and bowed a dozen times.

"Speech! speech!" they cried insistently, and at length the pseudo von Bielitz raised his hand.

Immediately there was a dead silence and the virtuoso ran his fingers through his long hair. Kenneson and Grosvenor stood frantically gesticulating in the wings.

"Come off!" they hissed. "Come off, you idiot. You'll spoil the whole thing."

But the operator only smiled and squared his shoulders.

"Tanks, loidies," he growled in profound tones, and walked in stately deliberation from the stage.

"What did he say?" Mrs. Kenneson asked Satterthwaite, who had joined the enthusiastic group.

"It's Hungarian," he said blandly. "He doesn't speak English, you know."

Before the front of the house was cleared, the Harmonicon Grand was reloaded on the van and en route, with the music rolls, to the city. Satterthwaite repaired to the stage door, where he and Kenneson ushered Briggsy and the operator into his automobile.

They made the trip to Dinglewood Park station, three miles down the line, in less than ten minutes, and as the headlight of the train appeared around the curve, Briggsy unbosomed himself.

"Say," he said to the operator, "wot wuz de name uv dat last piece but wan, wot yer played?"

"I d'naw," was the reply. "Number 6098, I tink. I ain't wise to de names; I only know d'numbers."

"It was by Bach, wasn't it?" Satterthwaite inquired anxiously.

Briggsy grinned again.

"Bach narten," he said. "I rung dat in meself."

"What was it, anyway?" Kenneson asked.

"'Chicken Chowder,'" said Briggsy, as he climbed aboard the smoker. "Peach, ain't it?"

Satterthwaite handed a ten-dollar bill to Kenneson.

"You win," he said sadly.

Grosvenor beamed a greeting to his fellow-conspirators on the eight-thirty next morning.

"How much do you suppose we raised?" he called.

"I'll be the goat," Satterthwaite rejoined. "How much?"

"Two thousand dollars, net—enough to endow a bed."

"Which I suppose you will call the Bach bed," Kenneson added.

"Or the von Bielitz bed," Grosvenor suggested.

"Name it for his sparring partner, Briggsy," said Satterthwaite; "and Kenneson will donate an extra ten to your two thousand."

And Kenneson did.



IT WOULD BE ASKING A GOOD DEAL

FIRST TRAMP—It's pretty cold today; I'd hate to live at the North Pole.

SECOND TRAMP—So would I; I wouldn't have the nerve to ask for a night's lodging, if the nights were six months long.

June, 1907—7

THE ANCIENT MEMORY

By John G. Neihardt

"SPEAKING of characters," said my friend the reporter one day when we were lunching together, "I've got one for you—the real thing in the line of psychological wonders. A week ago the Fugitive Sensation led me into Kilkenny's Place, and there I found the man for you all right. Talk about double consciousness and the subliminal self and that sort of thing! It's right here in Omaha, and is to be discovered any day consuming incredible quantities of booze when it can make close connections with the free hand. Name—John Smith; appearance—the Old Man of the Mountain; habitat—Kilkenny's. Look him up." And my friend gathered in the checks and disappeared in pursuit of the winged ephemeron, News.

Naturally, I made for Kilkenny's. As I entered I looked about for the said John Smith, and at once discovered a heterogeneous bundle of rags half-sitting, half-lying in a chair behind the stove. I was obliged to look twice before I could trace in this bundle the form of a man.

Stepping up to the bar, I bought a number of drinks for the house, which consisted at that hour of several varieties of the chronic saloon bum. Then I ventured to question the bartender.

"Does that old man behind the stove happen to be John Smith?" I asked. It was Smith.

"He seems to be resting easy at present," said I, "but I wish you'd call him up and make us acquainted."

"Queer old cuss," explained the bartender. "Sort of queer; bugs, you know!"

The bartender went over to the stove and violently shook the tumbled mass of rags and gray hair, which gave forth a raucous bellow, sat up, stared vacantly about, and getting up unsteadily, shambled to the bar.

"Give me drink, barkeep," begged the old man. His voice was thick and slow and utterly expressionless, half convincing me that the bartender had only too correctly indicated what the trouble was. "Give me drink, damn it. Pain in head—hell fire—give me drink."

"Give him the best in the house," said I.

The old man turned his grizzled countenance upon me with an idiotic light in his rheumy eyes. "Good young man, give poor old man drink; shake hand, damn it."

After the third glass had begun to work upon the man—God knows that is a very big word for the truth about him!—he became firmer on his legs and a light of intelligence dawned in his eyes.

"You're a pretty old man, I should judge, though quite well preserved for your years," said I, lying the lie that pities. "No doubt you have seen some life in your time—some big life."

He turned his gray visage full upon me, and in that moment I saw, as in the flash of a great white light, what Goethe meant by "the shipwreck of mankind."

"Fifty-six year old this Winter, young man." His voice had changed; it now suggested a yearning tremolo note on the G-string of a violin.

"Only fifty-six?" I queried incredulously. I could have sworn that no

less than a century could have dealt so with a man!

"Tain't years that eat deepest, young man; pain in head. Here!"

He pulled off his battered hat and parted the long gray locks, displaying a jagged scar.

"How did you get that?" I asked, hoping that this would lead to a story.

"Always there, young man. Pain in head. Only fifty-six. Thousand years in that scar. How much that make? Thousand and fifty-six?"

I glanced at the bartender, who was grinning, and I hated him for a moment; hated him for grinning at this Incarnation of the tragic Fate of Man.

"Come into a back room with me, Mr. Smith," I said; "I want to talk to you. I am a dealer in the stuff of life; I am poor and you are rich."

He followed me into a snug little back room and we sat down at the table.

"Your name is John Smith," I capitulated, "and you are fifty-six."

The old man passed a hideous trembling hand across his brow and sighed.

"That's what I always say, young man," he said, with a voice grown slow and thick again; "but sometimes—sometimes—sort of dream-mist—clouds—can't see—no—sun—buy me drink, young man. Pain in heahed—ll fire—pain in head."

I pressed the bell at my elbow and ordered a goodly supply, for it occurred to me that alcohol might dispel the mists, bring up the sun, quiet the mysterious pain.

When he had finished a number of glasses which would have put me under the table I noted that his eyes had become very bright, his hand steady, his head erect. In this gray, old, ash-choked grate of a single coal I had temporarily restored the flame of life.

Knowing no other way to recommence my investigation, I repeated myself glibly. "You are fifty-six, and your name is John Smith."

The old man stared upon me strangely.

"Who told you that?" he bawled.

"Who in hell is fifty-six and John Smith?"

"Oh, merely a surmise," I faltered, utterly dumfounded; "merely a surmise, you know!"

"Don't go surmising about *me*, you latter-day weakling! You—" His voice had become a bellow, the mere volume of it choking out the words. He seized a glass which I filled in a desperate attempt to seem at ease, and literally poured it down his throat.

"*John Smith!*" He laughed boisterously, a battle light still glowing balefully in his eyes. "*Fifty-six! I'm ninety-five years old this Winter, and I'm Julian Spears!*" And there's something in me older than Julian Spears by over a thousand Winters! I'm the Red Slayer of the Nickaroos, the Masters of the North; and I was a King of big men in this very land when Attila the Hun was sweeping Europe like a prairie fire! *John Smith! Fifty-six!"*

He ended in a contemptuous sniff.

Now quite convinced of the hopeless insanity of the old man, I allowed him to drown his vast contempt in silence and whisky. My friend the reporter had certainly seized upon my weakness to get a joke on me; a scurvy trick, I thought. Yet—the mere mention of Attila was enough to hold my interest in this old man who, when sober, seemed utterly illiterate, but, when drunk, talked ancient history with such fluency.

To be sure, I had never heard of such an American tribe as the Nickaroos of whom this old soaker claimed to be the "Red Slayer." But surely, a man who carried about with him a kit of names and ages to be used in various alcoholic conditions was an oddity if nothing else.

"Don't be angry," I said soothingly. "I am in all sincerity your friend, and I perceive that you have lived a most wonderful life. Would you be kind enough to begin at the beginning and tell me some of your various experiences?"

His eyes softened, and he gazed upon me with paternal kindness. He began speaking in a clear, masterful voice

that certainly shook my former belief in his madness. Also, he suddenly took on that air of good breeding which is unmistakable. There was something kingly about him as he talked. I looked into his eyes and felt that peculiar sensation of reverence which, strangely enough, perhaps, I always associate with a steady glow of purple light.

"Yes, I will tell you much," he began. "There is a soul behind your eyes, and it is kind. Soul is everything, my friend. There is nothing important but soul. I, who have the memory that transcends the years, know this. Here, from this eminence of human sorrow which I have builded with the toil of near on a century, I look out over that which is to men but a blindness and a confusion and a suffering. There are no years; there are no measurements. There is only eternity and Space and Soul. Life is merely the stuff upon which soul tries itself."

"That last is almost Browning," I interrupted, utterly amazed at the old man's discourse.

"Browning?" he repeated, with a questioning smile. "No; it is Truth.

"My last birth," he continued, "made me a New Englander among men. Julian Spears was born in the Winter of 1810. Birth is but a falling to sleep and a forgetting for a little while."

"My friend!" I interjected, for a totally new man had grown up before my eyes, sloughing off the erstwhile vagabond, "you seem acquainted with the poets! Are you aware that you have quoted Wordsworth?"

"Wordsworth?" he repeated, with his soft questioning smile. "You have numerous and odd names for Truth! A sleep and a forgetting," he went on quietly; "a forgetting of the ancient and eternal things; a believing in things evanescent. And I grew into a laughing, rollicking boyhood, drinking great draughts of sensuous joy.

"My father was a farmer, and mine was the glad, simple heart of those who inherit the Antæan wisdom, keeping close to the earth."

Here into the pause of a breathing space I threw a word of wonder. "What do you not know? To poetry you add mythology!"

"Mythology? Verily, Truth has many names among men! Ah, I see you have not the Ancient Memory."

He drank another glass and proceeded.

"But one day a subtle change began. Slowly, slowly a strange new sense began to grow upon me. Every nook of my former happy life became haunted with a vague, vague memory. When I would shut my eyes at night, there was the moving of dark, vast shadow-figures in an infinity of gray mist. In the long Summer days the drone of the bees conveyed to me a dim meaning. It was like a song heard after many years—a song suggestive of a poignant but inexplicable sadness.

"And often in the bright mornings the chirping of a bird in a bough that hung across my window gave me a heartache that I could not understand. The tinkle of the cow-bells in the evening bore a vague import. It seemed that I had heard it all before. And the scent of the dew-steeped grass filled me with a sense of grief.

"Day by day this mysterious sense grew upon me, until all sounds were as echoes and all sights as shadows from a place once dear to me. Often I pined with a feeling of utter isolation, a feeling of being far from home. I longed to hear the sound behind these haunting echoes, to feel the substance behind these elusive shadows.

"My father sent me to college. Yet the new surroundings made no difference with me. I learned with little effort. All things were echoes and shadows, echoes and shadows. Nothing was new. All things suggested a far home to which I longed to return; and I sickened with nostalgic dreams.

"The sun of ancient wildernesses aroused me in the mornings, and half-awake I breathed the Spring scent of forests I had never seen. And often in the nights I felt about my face the coarse black hair of giant women, and their brawny hands caressed me.

"I did not know the meaning of these things; for birth is a forgetting.

"But one day I discovered in a book-stall a volume of adventures among the Indians. A poor, foolish story it was; but from its pages came a great burst of light for me. It was like the sun fighting its way through a fog."

Here the old man paused and fell excitedly upon the liquor. He drank a number of glasses in rapid succession. His manner changed. When he spoke again there was a strained note in his voice. He had the agitated manner that foreruns delirium.

"Vague dreams became distinct memories. Through my modern flesh I felt the rush of an ancient spirit. I was conscious of an ancient bigness. My veins fevered with the memory of mighty deeds that I had done in an old-time sturdier flesh. In my sleep I saw the great bronze face of her I loved, set in glorious masses of black hair. A breeder of brawny fighting men was she; a suckler of the big, the masterful, the unafraid. Her hot, wet lips burned my mouth like fire. I reached my arms to her and wept to be again at home where, far off, I saw the wooded mountains lift their purple masses into the sun and burn with gold where the summits heaved up a clear blue arch of sky.

"And in the days a spirit from the West wooed me, and often I saw the sunset through tears; for I knew the sunset to be the dawn far off upon the peaks of home."

As the old man proceeded with increasing rapidity of speech, I had noted changes in his face. His expression became utterly savage, yet wonderfully masterful. Then suddenly, though he still talked with great rapidity and in a very loud voice, I was conscious that he was giving forth a torrent of utterly unintelligible sounds. I could not doubt that he was actually speaking words which he understood perfectly. His gestures and intonations were those of eloquence; yet to me it was all a gibberish, a harsh guttural series of barbaric sounds, suggesting several Indian tongues with

which I am acquainted slightly, but utterly without meaning to me.

Little by little the liquor overpowered him. His speech became slow and thick; and finally his gray-bearded chin drooped upon his breast and he fell to snoring heavily.

I got up and went out into the bar-room.

"See that Smith is properly cared for," I said to the bartender; "and here's money for his lodging and meals. Keep him here tomorrow for me."

I went home in a deep study. Whether or not this old man was a fake I did not know. At least he seemed worth studying, and I firmly believed that his story had only been begun. I lay awake most of the night. Far on toward morning a thought struck me. I fancied I began to see some light. "That scar," I said to myself, "holds the secret of this business somehow. It must have been the result of a violent blow, and that accounts for his mental condition when not powerfully stimulated."

But this about his being fifty-six and John Smith when sober, and ninety-five and somebody else when drunk? Could it be possible that the head wound had been received fifty-six years ago, destroying the normal memory of Julian Spears, and sending forth into the world this poor, doddering John Smith?

Was not that just such a name as would be donated by the world to a man who had none?

I decided to experiment the next day on the respective effects of various degrees of stimulation.

I found John Smith, alias Spears, again doing the rag-bundle act in the chair behind the stove. Half-carrying, half-leading him into the back room, I ordered beer. After he had finished several bottles, I began my experiment.

"Let's see," I said; "did I understand your name to be—I am very forgetful; I hope you will pardon me—"

"Smith," he said.

"And you said you are seventy-five, did you not? I ask because it seems incredible that you should be so old."

"Only fifty-six," he said, eying the push-button significantly. "Don't like beer; do you?"

His speech was thick and halting. As I gazed upon this pitiful gray derrick of a man, I could scarcely believe that I had heard him discourse so freely the day before.

I ordered whisky. He drank four glasses, while I watched the change that was going on in his face—a change suggestive of a Winter dawn creeping up a cloudless sky.

"Smith," I mused aloud, feeling that Julian Spears was about to emerge winged from the chrysalis of Smith. "There are a great many Smiths."

"My friend," said he, "I must beg you to cease interrupting me. I have already stated that my name is Julian Spears." And then, to my surprise, he began with the story of his life at the very point where it had been broken off the day before, while I made a mental note of the exact amount of stimulants necessary for the transformation—four bottles of beer and four glasses of whisky.

"In my twenty-first year," he began, with the air of a man who takes up the thread of a narrative after a momentary interruption, "I took ship for New Orleans. This was in 1831. From the West I felt the lure of a magnetic Mystery that steadily increased with the decreasing of the intervening distance. I became a recruit in the growing army of the great Fur Empire, whose Western capital was St. Louis.

"I started on the long trip to the upper Missouri with a cordelle gang. A trip for the breaking of little hearts, it was; but I was strong, and in my heart there was the song of one who feels the home-trail under his feet. I was never conscious of weariness; I scarcely felt the dragging weight of the cordelle upon my shoulders, though others sickened with the toil, cursing the evil fate that led them into the North. For a great Mystery lured me on, and an ancient memory sustained me.

"While my companions in toil pined

for home, I felt the growing of a great Joy within me. The wild scenery became more and more familiar to me. I was as one who had left his home country in early boyhood, returning in manhood and rejoicing to see the hills of home again. Where had I seen it all? When had I breathed the sweet, pure air before? Could this be but a hallucination to be explained psychologically? Was this strange sensation but the shadow of the thought, coeval with it?

"Ah, well, I knew it was the ancient memory! These plains, these hills, these bluffs that reared their tousled heads above the yellow flood—all were mine! Here in this world a former Julian Spears, big of bone and masterful, had conquered, whispering the mighty word that was a kingly cry for all the tribes!

"The great bronze face of her I loved burned ever in the darkness of my sleep, and in the keen black fire of her eyes I read the knowledge that transcends the years."

The old man filled his glass, drank it off and gazed for a space upon me with eyes grown large and penetrating and masterful.

"And now," he continued, "the wild sweet wonder of it all comes back upon me. Look—here!"

He parted the thin gray hair upon his cheek, displaying a blood-red birthmark with five flame-like points extending upward from a splotch of red. It suggested vaguely the stamp of a human hand dipped in blood.

"We reached our destination in the Fall of '32," he went on, with seeming incoherence; "and then began the Winter's toil—the gathering of furs. I, with a company of ten others, pushed far toward the headwaters of the Yellowstone.

"And the ancient memory grew vivid like a thought of yesterday. The mark which I have shown you began to burn as though seared with a hot iron. I had a sense of some impending Joy. And then one night I dreamed—or was it a dream? It was rather like the waking from a dream.

"It seemed that I was descending a steep mountain-trail, and the clouds were about me; and through the mist ran the tumult of long-forgotten battles, the wail of women in vanquished towns, the shout of victors. And suddenly the clouds dispersed, and there was a valley that I knew, and a great multitude thronged below with faces lifted upward. And I descended, and there was a murmur of much wonder as I strode among the multitude; and every face was familiar as the face of a brother. And there was a peering into my face, and a great cry arose: 'The Slayer! The Slayer has come back! Behold the mark upon his cheek.' The words were not English, yet their meaning was clear. And the dream passed.

"And we pushed on into the wilderness, which was no wilderness for me, but a land of home. In the great glittering snow wastes I felt the beating of a mother heart. I sang to see the far mountains lift their mystic peaks into the frosty air. I spoke no word of this to my companions. It seemed too sweet, too holy for speech. And often in the nights I tramped about the camp while all the others slept, questioning the big close stars that burned white flames upon the steel-blue heavens. I whispered yearning, pagan prayers into the vast Winter silence, and there was the answering of tongues in the stillness.

"And one evening as we sat about the fire, there was one among us who told of a rumor that ran among the prairie peoples; told how a little tribe far up the mountain fastnesses was waiting for a Messiah who should come with the Spring to restore the ancient glory of the race. The Red Slayer, he was to be called, and he would be the ancient king of his people reborn in modern flesh. And all the prairie peoples would be conquered, and the white man would be driven into the big salt water.

"And this was but a pleasantry to the others who sat about the fire sick for home. To me it was as the blare of a haughty trumpet calling me to kingship.

"I took the trail at the hour when the camp was deepest in sleep. I took with me only my rifle and ammunition, for I was near the country of my people. I traveled far into the fastnesses of the mountains.

"Old loves grew upon me as I went, and in my breast I felt the ache of ancient, mortal wounds. Wild battle sounds went crying down the snow-winged winds; and faces, faces, faces, peered upon me from the mystic white mazes of the storms.

"And when the soft, sweet influence of the south winds grew upon the world and only shadowed gulches held the snows, I found myself upon the mountain trail that led into the valley of my dream.

"And below me was the village of a people. And as I entered it, a multitude pressed about me to peer into my face; and a great cry grew and spread and filled the valley: 'He has come! Behold the mark upon his cheek!'"

The old man's manner had changed. He seemed as one almost overpowered with some great passion. His face worked nervously and his eyelids twitched. He drank another glass, and, fearing that he was nearing the point when the stimulant should cease and the narcotic begin, I rang for seltzer. Without seeming to notice the new drink which I had substituted, he proceeded rapidly, no longer in the quiet, masterful manner of his former discourse, but in a high-pitched, jerky voice.

"And there was a great joy and a universal shouting. The cliffs were made to blaze with many beacons. There was the roaring of feast fires in the village. And in the midst of the feast came she whose face had haunted all my dreams. Tall and shapely was she; black of hair and eyes—the choicest of the tribe, kept pure to be the bride of the long-awaited King of Men. With hot, wet lips she gave me the bridal kiss. And the centuries rolled back; once again the old time lived; and down across the desert spaces of a hundred aching births I gazed into the immensity of eternal things!

"And I was a king again—the master of a brawny, fighting people. And we went forth to glorious battles.

"And in the fifteenth year we pushed eastward into the country of the Sioux."

The old man's voice had grown deeper and coarser until it grated harshly upon my ears. It now suggested the sawing of a bow upon the G-string of a water-soaked fiddle. The light went out of his eyes. I filled a glass with whisky and held it to his lips, but he did not drink. He became incoherent, his speech falling regularly in pitch from word to word, after the manner of a phonograph running down.

"There was a battle—a terrible battle—hordes of Sioux—stone-axe—head—"

The old man collapsed as though he had been felled with a heavy blow. I endeavored to arouse him. With his tousled gray head drooped upon his breast he snored heavily.

That evening I dined with my friend the reporter, and carefully narrated to him what I had heard. He mused a while in silence.

"Born 1810," said he at length; "John Smith and fifty-six when sober—Julian Spears and ninety-five when drunk. Messiah business began in the Spring of '33, lasting fifteen years. That puts the stone-axe blow in '48. John Smith is fifty-six, eh? I should say fifty-seven, if Smith began with the blow. This is the year 1905."

"But," I ventured with a sudden inspiration, "I should think we could allow at least a year for the recovery from the immediate effects."

"It's madness, sure," remarked my friend; "but deuced methodical. Four bottles of beer and four whiskies for the transfiguration, did you say? Well, give him the two bottles and two whiskies and let *Smith* talk."

On the following day my friend and I went together in search of Smith-Spears. He was doing the rag bundle in the same place as before. We got him into the back room and gave him the prescribed dose, carefully noting the growth of the flame of life.

"Mr. Smith," said my friend, when a light of intelligence had grown in the old man's eyes, "you were a fur-trader in the early days, were you not? Smith—I have not mistaken the name? I thought not. You were a fur-trader! What interesting experiences you must have had! When did you go into the business, Mr. Smith?"

The old man passed a bony hand across his brow.

"In '49—I think—yes—'49."

"And you are only fifty-six years old?" pursued my friend. "Why, you were born in the fur country!"

"Born?" queried the old man dazedly. "Pain in head—pain in head."

"It's all right," whispered my friend to me; "bring on the Red Slayer act."

John Smith drank glass after glass; and as a green leaf springs radiant from the bursting bud, so came Julian Spears from the gray, dried husk of Smith!

The shadow of a great pain flashed across his face. His eyes became masterful. He raised his grizzled visage and chanted dolefully:

"My people! My people! Oh, God! Where in the swirl of time have I lost them? Where are the lodges of my kin? Where is the sweet bronze face of the Master's bride? I sicken for home! I long for the smoke-tang of my vanished campfires! Where are my fighting men—the big, the masterful, the unafraid?"

He was rapidly becoming very drunk. His voice had grown into a wind-like howl. He extended his arms trembling with passion, and I was suddenly aware that his words were no longer English. Strange barbaric battle-cries filled the little room. He arose to his feet—a gray, terrible figure, shaken like a tall tree in a tempest. His eyes flashed as though they stared upon the final rush of a victorious host.

Then, like a figure in a capricious dream, he shrank—tottered—folded up. He grasped his chair feebly and sank into it with a groan.

And there before us snored the grisly, ragged thing that was John Smith.

THE BALLAD OF THE ANGEL

By Theodosia Garrison

“**W**HOM is it knocking in the night,
That fain would enter in?”
“The ghost of Lost Delight am I,
The sin you would not sin,
Who comes to look in your two eyes
And see what might have been.”

“Oh, long ago and long ago
I cast you forth,” he said,
“For that your eyes were all too blue
Your laughing mouth too red,
And my torn soul was tangled in
The tresses of your head.”

“Now mind you with what bitter words
You cast me forth from you?”
“I bade you back to that fair hell
From whence your breath you drew,
And with great blows I broke my heart
Lest it might follow, too.

“Yea, from the grasp of your white hands
I freed my hands that day,
And have I not climbed near to God
As these His henchmen may?”
“Ah, man, ah, man! 'twas my two hands
That led you all the way.”

“I hid my eyes from your two eyes
That they might see aright.”
“Yet think you 'twas a star that led
Your feet from height to height?
It was the flame of my two eyes
That drew you through the night.”

With trembling hands he threw the door,
Then fell upon his knee.
“Ah, armèd vision cloaked in light,
Why do you honor me?”
“The Angel of your Strength am I
Who was your sin,” quoth she.

“For that you slew me long ago
My hands have raised you high;
For that you closed my eyes—my eyes
Are lights to lead you by,
And 'tis my touch shall swing the gates
Of heaven when you die!”

GALATEA

By Arthur Stanley Wheeler

"WELL, Billy, what do you think of her?"

I hesitated before answering; it is always a bit difficult to phrase a suitable reply when a thoroughly good but tactless friend wants to know what one thinks of his wife. Especially is it hard if the friend is—well, say mature in years—while the wife is decidedly young. Moreover, I knew that the question, from Kirby-Smith's point of view, called for a verbal pat on the back, somewhat delicately applied; and lastly, I felt a trifle irritated at my host for compelling me to speak at all, because I was in a mood for thought, not utterance.

We were sitting, Kirby-Smith and I, on the veranda of his Summer cottage, and the hour was the one dedicated to the after-dinner cigar. The August moon, uncannily red, was climbing over the eastern horizon behind a gridiron of little clouds, and paling as it touched the clearer sky. So close to the water was the wooded bluff on which the cottage stood that we could see the beach only by leaning over the veranda railing; theplash of small waves uncurling on the shore seemed immediately under us. In front stretched the bay, half-encircled by the mainland and two low, sandy points, and in the offing, a mile away, the grassy acre of Flag Island showed black in the semi-darkness. Beyond that, again, was the broad Sound, with a couple of Long Island's lights beginning to twinkle faintly behind it. A breeze from the southwest made the waxing moongleams dance serpent-wise across the wavelets, and whispered

in the hardy oaks of the grove. No, the time was not one for speech; I fear my response to Kirby-Smith was scarcely as sympathetic as it should have been.

"Oh, very beautiful, Gerry," I said. "Very—er—artistic."

The last word—rather chilly, as I thought—seemed by chance to have touched the right button. Kirby-Smith chuckled vaingloriously, in the manner of one whose work has been properly appreciated.

"You've hit it!" he exclaimed. "She's just that—an artistic creation. There's not a false note, not a glaring color. But, Billy"—he leaned forward impressively—"you ought to have seen her as she was when I found her!"

"Um!" said I. Uncertain of my ground, I did not care to emit anything more committal. I was seeing Kirby-Smith for the first time in seven years, and his wife I had never laid eyes on until the afternoon of that day. He was, apparently, the same cheerful, benevolent, plattitudinously theoretical chap as of yore, but—

Evidently he found my grunt sufficiently comprehensive, for he leaned back, and stretched out his short, irreproachably-tailored legs. The tilt of his cigar, the glow of which lit up his nose, indicated supreme self-satisfaction.

"What did you think when you heard I was married?" he inquired with an air of humor.

"My dear Gerry, I hoped that you were to be congratulated."

He laughed.

"Just so, just so. Well, I trust

you're convinced that congratulations are in order?"

"Entirely. I find Mrs. Kirby-Smith charming."

Again he leaned forward.

"When I made her acquaintance," he stated, "she wore pigtais and a sunbonnet, and had never been twenty miles away from her native village. Quite a change, eh?"

In response to this prod between my mental ribs I sent forth the usual "Yes, indeed." If there was to be any further development of the subject, I meant to let him do the developing; my personal preference is in favor of allowing the past to bury its dead—if it will. Besides, I was watching a rowboat which had emerged from the shadow of the bluff a couple of hundred yards away, and was moving in our direction as if pulled over the water by some invisible string. The moon was fairly up, by then; and in the fantastic mingling of pale light with gloom the movements of the rorer were indistinguishable. Only the dull, faint clank of oarlocks working in their sockets, and the occasional glimpse of a dark oar, betrayed the motive power within the boat. Not until they shot into the path of the moon would the rorer and his craft be clearly silhouetted.

"Perhaps you heard that I was tempting the Fates with a sort of Lord-of-Burleigh trick," Kirby-Smith prompted, with sublime—and utterly unconscious—egotism.

"I spent the four years previous to your marriage in the East," I reminded him. "And the three years thereafter I divided between the Klondike and South Africa, so I didn't get much accurate information about your doings. I did hear, however, that you had educated a country girl, and then married her. Evidently the result has proved worth the trouble. I say, Gerry, look at that boat! That fellow's a good oar."

The rowboat had invaded the bright strip, and was being driven toward our beach with powerful strokes. One could follow the swing of the oars, clean-cut and regular as if their handler

had been in a racing-shell, and the rhythmical motions of the man himself stood out like those of shadows thrown against a white screen.

"That's Tom Maxwell," said my host. "Nice boy—good-tempered, athletic, lots of money in his own right. Yonder half-rater is his; he probably wants us to go for a moonlight sail. . . . No, considering your peregrinations, of course you couldn't have heard much about me and my little affairs. We stay-at-homes get to assuming that everyone knows as much about us as we know about ourselves and each other. To you, the cares of empire; to us, the fire on the hearth. Well, well, there are advantages on both sides—advantages on both sides. The fundamental differences between the two kinds of men are not so great, after all. Why, if it hadn't been for Rhona, maybe I, too, would have offered my services to the Boers!"

I imagined Kirby-Smith's rotund, sedentary shape astride a stringy horse on the African veldt, and repressed a grin.

"There's many a man in business life today who would make a first-class soldier," he continued, wagging his head. "A little aid from Destiny, and— Hullo, Tom! What's up?"

From the blackness beyond the veranda steps a tall youth had appeared as if by magic. He stood cap in hand, a foot on the lower step, and smiled up at us.

"Evening, colonel," he said. (Kirby-Smith had once figured in that high capacity on the staff of a governor of his State.) "I thought perhaps you people would like to go for a sail. There's a nice little breeze, and it seems a crime to let it go to waste."

My friend performed the ceremony of introduction, and young Maxwell hurried to include me in his offer. The "colonel," however, vetoed the idea, so far as he himself was concerned.

"Sorry, Tom, but my rheumatics are giving hints of trouble to come. Billy, you go along if you like; you'll have a mighty fine sail."

"If Mr. Maxwell will pardon me," I

said, "I shall plead laziness. I'm so extremely comfortable here that I hesitate to shift, even for the delights of moonlight sailing."

"Captain Delarey has seen her majesty the moon from every kind of vessel and in every clime, Tom," Kirbysmith averred. "You must let us two old veterans off. But I guess Rhona'll be glad to go; she's not overly interested in our stories of old times." He lifted his voice in a bellow: ".Rhona!"

Mrs. Kirbysmith's clear, colorless tones answered immediately from within, and in a moment the lady herself graced the veranda. She greeted Maxwell exactly as she had greeted me upon my arrival—with perfect courtesy and without the slightest visible emotion. He might have been as much a stranger as I. Her poise was no less admirable than her face and figure were faultless. During my brief stay at the house I had not seen her composure disturbed by so much as the undue flutter of an eyelash; I wondered whether she met everybody with the same lack of feeling. She made me think of a statue in ivory and gold, with eyes of turquoise.

"Why, yes, I'll go," she said, when the situation had been explained. "You'll excuse me, Captain Delarey?"

"Oh, certainly—and envy you your energy."

She smiled slightly and, turning to Maxwell, asked him if he thought it cold enough on the bay for a heavy coat. There was neither enthusiasm nor self-consciousness in her manner; I could imagine that, had she lived in the days of the French Revolution, she would have received a compliment and a summons to the guillotine with equal indifference and politeness. Kirbysmith paddled off fussily, and reappeared in a moment, bearing a cloak, shawls and half-a-dozen pillows. All of these aids to comfort were accepted dutifully—though I thought the faintest ripple of amused impatience stirred the opaque tranquillity of the turquoise eyes.

We watched them row out toward

the anchored half-rater. Once we heard the young man's pleasant voice raised a little, and then his companion's mild, expressionless laughter—the sort of accolade which the ordinary person bestows on a well-worn joke told by the guest of honor—came back to us across the water. It did not seem probable that Maxwell's evening would be a lively one.

Kirbysmith's attitude was paternally indulgent.

"One should always make allowances for youth," he observed, as he broke a match in the effort to light a fresh cigar. "I'm sometimes afraid that Rhona finds life dull with me, so I seize every opportunity to throw her with suitable people of her own age. Tom and his friends have been most kind. . . . By the way, did I tell you that her name is not really Rhona? She was christened Daisy, but I couldn't stand that, so I changed it to one that has always been a favorite of mine—one that fitted her beauty."

"Rather arbitrary, don't you think?" I ventured, much entertained.

He took no offense.

"Oh, no; merely a small part of my scheme of education. I was determined that she should be as perfect as art could make her. When I began with her, I stipulated that I should have absolute control."

"She does you credit. She must have been singularly amenable."

"Receptive," said Kirbysmith. "Receptive is the word. Rhona was naturally gifted with great intelligence; all she needed was discriminating treatment. She has a lovely character."

I saw that down under his conceit there was a sincere attachment to the girl. His desire to talk about her was not to be attributed to disloyalty. I was somewhat relieved, for despite his philistine tendencies, I had never detected the least meanness in him, and did not want to begin; but also, I commenced to pity him vaguely. One too often has occasion to pity people whose intentions are invariably good.

"Seven years ago," Kirbysmith con-

tinued, "Rhona didn't know the difference between a knife and a fork, for table use. You can see how clever she must be to have acquired all she has in so comparatively short a time. Of course the school I sent her to helped her a good deal, but, my dear fellow"—once more the impressive pause—"no school under heaven could have given her the polish, the poise, the breadth of mental view, which she exhibits today. Those things are *my* work. I've labored over her as carefully as an author toils over his manuscript, or a sculptor at his stone. Yes, with all due credit to her, she is my achievement."

"Pygmalion," I suggested.

"Yes," said he, "I am Pygmalion. And some day, I hope, Galatea will awake to life and love. Meanwhile, I can only wait, and serve her as best I know how."

The acknowledgment was made so simply that it reached real dignity, and I no longer felt inclined to laugh. Shallow and fatuous though Kirby-smith might be—and undoubtedly was—there was small comedy in the matter for him. He was doing his best, in the face of possibilities none the less tragic because he failed to realize most of them.

"I'm sure your hope will be justified, Gerry," I said, as decently as I could. "A woman couldn't find a kinder man to fall in love with."

"I'm not so young as some," he returned, "but there's a solid quarter of a century in me yet. And Rhona has a good heart. I think she'll give it to me in time."

"No doubt of it," I said firmly.

The glowing end of his cigar quivered a little as he raised toward his lips the hand that held it.

"You were with Cronje for a while," he remarked. "Was he as much of an iron man as the papers made him out?"

I launched into reminiscences, and coasted along the capes of memory for an hour or so, driven by the wind of his questions. His curiosity was vigorous, but at the advent of the second hour habit asserted itself, and he began to

yawn; possibly, too, my tales were tiresome. As a kindness to him I intimated that the salt air had made me drowsy and that I would have to let him continue his vigil alone.

"Oh, I sha'n't sit up," he replied. "I never worry about Rhona; she's perfectly safe in Tom's care. I'll be in bed long before they get back. With this breeze they won't care to come in until eleven o'clock, at least."

We indulged in a nightcap at the sideboard. Then he saw me punctiliously to my room, made sure that I was comfortable, and departed, heavy-eyed but exuding hospitality.

I undressed, and sought slumber conscientiously; but I was not at all sleepy, and the noise of small waves breaking on the sand below my open window—a kind of sound which ordinarily acts as a lullaby—made me the wider awake. At last I got up, donned a bathrobe, and seated myself at the window.

The moon was high in the heavens. Facing the southwest as I sat, I could see the silver road which all lovers travel, beginning at the shore, broadening and intensifying for a space, and then narrowing and fading until it lost itself in a faint, unearthly radiance at some indefinite spot near the horizon. (One always hopes that the ending of Lovers' Road is not too abrupt, at that indefinite spot over There!) Thirty feet below me the beach gleamed strangely white, while the foliage of the bank, close to the steps that led up to the house, was sable-black. It was a place—and an hour—for visions and dreams.

I suppose I must have yielded to the magic influence and done some retrospective moon-gazing on my own account, for I was not aware of the returning wanderers before their row-boat grated on the sand. They came up the steps promptly, Mrs. Kirby-smith a little in advance. Their faces, though lifted, were nevertheless in shadow; I sat still, fearing by an abrupt motion to attract their attention and give them the idea that I had been spying on them. In the meantime, I cursed myself cordially for my clumsy-

ness in not getting out of the way at their approach.

Fortunately, there was nothing for me to see—or almost nothing. They parted at the corner of the house without even a hand-clasp. Maxwell went back to the boat, and the lady came in immediately. But as she turned, her face was in the moonlight for a second, and if she had been a person of ordinary type, I should have been sure that she was close to tears. I put the impression down to Luna's trickery, and went back to bed.

In the morning, a half-hour before the time of my train, Kirby-Smith was called out to give orders for the laying of a drain, and his wife and I were left together.

"I'm afraid you thought it very rude of me to desert you last night," she apologized, after a perceptible hiatus.

"Not at all," I reassured her. "On the contrary, I should have considered it impolite in you to stay. You would have been reflecting on Gerry's powers of entertainment."

"Yes, you probably got along quite as well without me. You and Gerald must have had many things to say to each other. I'm always glad when one of his old friends visits us; I fancy he's lonely, sometimes."

Obviously, that was the proper sort of speech for her to make. I wondered what she was really thinking.

"Old friends'?" I queried. "I hope that refers merely to length of friendship and not to actual age, Mrs. Kirby-Smith."

"No one could think of you as aged, Captain Delarey," she returned with entire gravity. "Your voyaging has kept you young. But Gerald has been stopping at home."

"Gerald," said I, "is one of the best men I know."

She looked at me squarely and coolly; there was expression in the turquoise depths, though I could not tell exactly what that expression meant.

"I think," she said slowly, "that he is the best man in the world. He is

so good that his very trustfulness robs people of the will to deceive him."

It was cleverly put, and I stood justly rebuked. In fact, from that moment I commenced to like her.

"I have every confidence in—the people he trusts," I said. "And as you observe, faith is frequently its own safeguard. . . . The night was a beautiful one, wasn't it?"

She smiled her unenthusiastic smile.

"Yes—almost too beautiful. But you have seen so many strange sights that I should think moonlight on the Sound would seem tame to you."

"Moonlight is always moonlight. Its charm has survived the hackneying of near-poets and novelists, and claims the attention of even a so-called soldier of fortune. Nearly everyone has a vein of sentiment, and I admit that down in my heart I'm no less romantic than—than your husband, for instance."

"Gerald?" Her brows went up the barest fraction of a quarter-inch. "Yes, Gerald's very romantic. Did you and he talk Romance last evening?"

"To some extent," I answered. "At least, we touched on one old fable."

"I hope it was a pretty one."

"Extremely. It was the story of Pygmalion and Galatea."

She almost frowned.

"I've never liked that story. It seems so false and cut-and-dried."

"Don't you care for happy endings, then?" I hazarded.

"Happy endings?" she repeated. "Of course I like them, when they're logical; but in the case you mention, one feels that the *dénouement* was switched on for effect."

Was she echoing the views of some scholastic purveyor of rhetoric and composition? There was but the least emphasis in her manner to warrant an assumption that she voiced a distinctive opinion. I pursued the argument:

"We must allow poetic license in a fable, you know. In an age of wonders, there was nothing extraordinary in the notion of a statue coming to life."

"I find no fault with the notion itself," she retorted. "Without it, there would have been no story. But at the climax both feminine nature and the sarcasm of Destiny are ignored. There is no shading. Suppose, for example, that Galatea had awaked inopportune-ly—perhaps at the touch of a visitor to the sculptor's studio, some young man who, in his admiration, chanced to lay a finger on her marble arm. Such sympathetic contact would have been far more likely to arouse her love than the caresses of a wielder of chisels, no matter how lovingly the chiseling had been done; and the crisis would have been more reasonable and more truly dramatic."

"A very melancholy kind of crisis, nevertheless," said I, after a little silence. "Also, a poor reward for Pygmalion's toil. And what of the outcome? Would Galatea have run away with the youthful visitor?"

"Surely not," Mrs. Kirby-Smith re-plied. "She was the sculptor's prop-erty—and besides, gratitude alone would have been sufficient to keep her faithful. Pygmalion was a kind man, though doubtless wearisome now and

then. No; Galatea would have stifled her awakening and pretended to be a statue again."

"Leaving the tale very much as it started?"

"Rather, carrying it on in a minor strain."

Another silence—ended by Kirby-smith, who, puffing, threw open the door.

"Don't want to hurry you, old chap," he announced, "but the car-riage is here. The trains on this road are only on time once a month, but just as sure as you count on their being late, they bob up at the scheduled minute. Where's your suit-case?"

They both accompanied me to the sta-tion. As the train pulled out, I stood on the back platform and watched them until a curve of the road took me out of range. Kirby-Smith's short, adipose figure was held erect, as be-fitted a former colonel on a governor's staff; a handkerchief was waved aloft, and a cheerful grin divided my friend's visage. A little apart from him stood his wife. My last sight of her reminded me of the first—a statue in ivory and gold, with eyes of turquoise.



TO A BUTTERFLY

By Edward Wilbur Mason

THOU flower of amaranth on flaming wing!
I see thee sphered with light like any star,
Forever poised in golden air afar,
Or hovering brightly where the roses swing.
Though frail thou art—the Summer's daintiest thing—
All its warm wealth of loveliness untold
Trembles and pulses in thy breast of gold;
Glamour of heaven round thy flight doth cling.

Elusive vision of the radiant air!
Idly I fancy thee the soul of joy
Soaring in youth, life's flowery world above.
But stay! art thou not wanton spirit fair
Of her, that frail triumphant queen of Troy
Who basks immortal in the smile of Love?

THE MIRAGE

By Katharine Metcalf Roof

AS Waring stepped out on the veranda he thought it deserted. The twilight, filled with the cool perfume of the syringa, lay like a visible silence upon the earth. The trees were a soft blur against the sky. The faint rush of the water mingled indistinguishably with the sound of the wind in the leaves. The glimmer of a white gown, holding the last light as white will, caught his eye. An indolent hope that it might be Rose Langham impelled him in that direction. He was close to her before he recognized Constance Merwin. Waring was disappointed. His mood and the hour demanded beauty—a quality that Constance, it seemed to him, rather conspicuously lacked. Nevertheless he stopped and greeted her. She was sitting on the steps with her chin in her hand, in a childish fashion, looking off across the water. She glanced up with a half-smile, indifferently welcoming as she answered him. Some vibration in her voice struck him as in accord with the hour. He paused indeterminately.

"It is the time of day when everything seems to stop," he said; "a sort of interlude."

"No—a prelude, I should say." She moved slightly, lazily, and leaned back, clasping her hands behind her head. "I feel as if I were waiting for something to begin."

He felt a quick response to her words. "May I sit here and wait with you?" he asked.

She laughed softly. "But if nothing should happen—"

"Oh, it will. I feel sure that it will." He seated himself on the step beside

her, turning with his back against the opposite pillar so that he faced her. There was a silence. After a time she spoke as if to the water. "This early twilight always seems like Spring to me." A moment later she added, "Yet I suppose—if one were making analogies—that twilight ought to be like the Fall, and early morning like Spring."

"Fancy there being any ought to about it!"

For answer she smiled; it came to him dimly through the twilight like the smile on the face of a faded Leonardo drawing.

"Fall is somehow terribly sad to me, and Spring joyous," he said presently.

She shook her head. "To me Spring is sad because it promises more than Summer can give."

"But we would not want it if we could have it."

His eyes rested upon her lightly, then something about the shadowy silhouette of her head and throat held them. The darkness seemed to be playing a trick with her irregular face, making it mysteriously suggest a beauty it did not possess.

"You mean it would bore us to have nothing left to wish for."

"Yes, with nothing left to be uncertain about, heaven would be hell."

"I have always thought that earth would make a very nice heaven with some things just a little bit different." The thing that he seemed to see in her face was subtly in her voice. He wondered that he had not noticed it before.

"Only the Philistine demands per-

fection," he answered. "All the masters have known that; Michael Angelo knew it, Rodin discovered it—Corot. The suggestion of beauty is greater than beauty—the appeal to the imagination."

She smiled enigmatically. "The imagination of an artist."

And then people came up the path and interrupted them. She did not talk much after that, but sat still looking off at the sea. He sat silent also, watching her.

II

BUT in the daylight something of his former feeling about her returned. The explicit lines of her face interfered with his memory of the night before. Yet he found himself watching her, waiting for the look that had so stirred his sense of beauty. Sometimes he caught the passing reflection of it like the moving light of a prism; sometimes only the bare outlines were left. He told himself that she was like a landscape hard of detail in the sharp daylight dissolving into mysterious beauty in atmospheric effects of mist and half-light.

In the evening she wore a gauzy gown and her dark hair made uncertain shadows over her eyes. He watched her while he talked to beautiful Rose Langham, then, irresistibly impelled, crossed the room to her side.

"I looked for you at twilight, but I couldn't find you. Were you waiting somewhere for the something to happen?"

She smiled and looked down. I was on the river. . . . It didn't happen, after all, did it?"

"Oh, yes, something happened. I made a discovery." He looked down to meet the responsive question in her eyes. "It was about you."

She balanced the little personality delicately. "About me?"

Their eyes met. He smiled. "But it is my secret."

The reflection of his smile flitted illusively over her face.

"Perhaps it is mine," she concluded.

III

THE thing that he had seen in her face came oftener. Always when away from her he remembered it as her face. Finally it came to be there always.

The evening before he left they slipped away from the others and sat down by the edge of the water. Afterward, in recalling it, he could not remember that they had talked at all until she rose to go. She had turned for a last look at the tricky flicker of the lights over the water when he broke the silence.

"Have you found out yet what it was we were waiting for that first time in the twilight?" Their eyes met imperfectly in the darkness.

"I know—I know at least, what I was waiting for."

She answered inaudibly.

"You. I have been waiting for you all my life and didn't know it."

Her eyes seemed to become more distinct. "When did you find out?"

"I don't know. It came quickly, yet imperceptibly—like the twilight."

"Was that your discovery?"

"Part of it."

"Your secret?" He divined that she smiled through the darkness. "Then it was my secret, too. I was right." A disturbance in the water threw a reflection of starlight over her face and he found her looking at him intently. "And the rest of it—your discovery?"

"You know that, too."

"Tell me." She moved a step nearer.

"That you are beautiful."

She laughed softly. "That is certainly your secret. No one else will ever guess it!"

"No, no," he contradicted her with conviction, "it is true. I know. Your face makes me think beautiful things."

"But that does not mean that I am beautiful."

"No? What then?"

"Ah, *that*," she triumphed, "if you don't know—is *my secret*."

IV

SOME personalities have, inexplicably, their strongest hold in absence. In others the vividness of the actual presence creates with each meeting the impression of re-discovery. The thing that happened to Waring's consciousness of Constance Merwin in the two months of their separation before her return to town was as unaccountable as the mysterious spell her face held for him. She came and went, as it were, without volition in his memory. Often he felt her near him, a vibrant presence; again her face was as difficult of realization as a vanished perfume. Sometimes during the first few weeks after he had left her the unillumined facts of her appearance had come back to him, unbidden, with the crude, instantaneous distinctness of flashlight. But as the veil of the hours dropped insensibly, the picture of her in his mind's eye again took on the semblance of the faded Leonardo drawing with the faint omniscient smile that was like a chord of strange intervals.

Then one morning a letter came telling him that she was to return the following day, and mentioning an hour when he might see her. The appointed time was toward evening, yet it happened, after all, that they met in the daylight, unexpectedly, in the crash and noise of the street.

There was the momentary shock of recognition, readjustment; then as she spoke the ineffable something played over her face like light, and with a little leap of the heart he knew his illusion secure—knew rather what he had not previously realized—that he had feared for it.

He walked on with her, unconscious of where they went, the errand that had taken him out forgotten.

V

YET the progression of their knowledge of each other in the days that fol-

lowed seemed in some inevitable way as illusive as Waring's discovery. Pondering over it the artist likened his situation to that of the traveler arrived in the night, who watches the dim, unknown shapes about emerge gradually from the dark. Often he had the feeling that the progress of the light was inexplicably interfered with—arrested. Their circles lay somewhat apart. He lived in his studio world, his mind, when it was not occupied with her, busy with its problems. Her life was lived with other people, full of small events. Out of their differences they came to each other, their moods tuned sometimes to harmony, sometimes to discord. From time to time he recognized in her a lack of response to impressions that he felt strongly. Sometimes her comments struck him as trivial and irrelevant. Again a trick of expression or gesture would strike upon his nerves like the chill of a raw wind in Summer. At times when he was with her he had an odd sense of her not being there.

One Winter afternoon they were standing at her window toward nightfall looking out over the roof-tops. A cold sunset touched shining edges here and there to gold. She spoke abruptly out of the silence.

"You still see things in my ugly face?"

He was conscious of her eyes, star-like in the vague light, as he had seen them that Summer night.

"I am not blind yet."

"You mean that you still are" and added, "blind to its various deficiencies and defects."

"It has no deficiencies. Its defects are somehow—mysteriously—part of the spell."

She thought it over. "A deficiency is relative, of course. A lack to me might not be one to you."

"Yes, of course, we are different in a way," he answered.

She flashed an odd little smile at him, but instead of answering waited for him to go on.

"Yet not always. We seemed like two instruments keyed to one pitch that evening in the twilight."

"It is still twilight."

"What do you mean?"

She pulled down the shade and turned from the window. "Things always seem different in the country and in town."

"It is a different key." He looked up and fancied her inattentive, but after a moment she suggested, "Why not just a difference in mood?"

"If you prefer to put it that way."

Her next remark caused him to wonder. "There are differences that separate and differences that draw people together." She turned the electric key as she spoke, filling the room with tearose-colored light. Something in her soft movement touched him with the old, haunting suggestion, baffling as a resemblance that escapes the memory. His first conscious analysis framed itself definitely in his mind. It had promised something, her face, that it had not as yet fulfilled. The realization of his discovery was insensibly included in his answer to her last remark.

"How does one find out?"

She smiled her impenetrable smile with the lowered eyelids. "After it has happened."

VI

INEVITABLY she had appealed to his painter's imagination. His studio was filled with sketches of her, for the most part intentional sketches—the curve and angle of a quarter face or a suggestive blur in monochrome. If the canvases had been carried to a pretense of conclusion it was in cases where his choice of motive had been a study of the fall of light from a lamp or open fire with its subtle obscurities and revelations. To explicitness he had never committed himself.

One day while he was at work upon one of these sketches she suddenly questioned him.

"Why, I wonder, do you persistently refuse to see me by daylight?"

His mind, undetached from his canvas, met her observation literally. "It is daylight now."

"Not in your picture."

He placed some accents before he answered, "It is not any particular time of day in the picture."

"One could not see very clearly—in there."

Again he made several brush strokes and considered them before he replied: "Is it facts you want, then? Facts are not the truth."

"These sketches are not the truth, either—precisely—are they? When you paint people completely in full light, that is painting the truth, in a sense, isn't it?"

"You are speaking of my portraits."

"Oh, so mine are not portraits—what then?"

"Oh, why—impressions."

She laughed. "Is that all I am, then—an impression?"

"That is all beauty is—or inspiration."

She did not answer for so long that he, having forgotten his last remark, frowned vaguely at her out of a consideration of values when she spoke.

"You don't know the reason yourself."

"I don't know what you are talking about"—his distaste for her interruptive thought was apparent—"but it has done something to your face."

"Laid bare a fact, perhaps."

He studied her face, suddenly helpless. He put down his brush. "I can't do any more today. I believe I'll have a dab at that early morning thing while the light lasts."

It came to her a little slowly as a dismissal.

VII

ONE morning, two months later, they were standing at the same window looking out over the roof-tops, incredibly ugly in the strong Winter daylight. His eyes recoiling from the prospect, chanced upon the shifting lights of her opal ring. He remembered how, when his eyes first rested upon it in the jeweler's window, he had felt it instantly, inevitably, hers. She

moved her hand and her act drew his eyes to her face. He found her watching him.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"The differences that separate," she answered.

He frowned. "I don't understand."

"We have not seen each other for two weeks—and you did not know it."

He carried his frown to the desolate dinginess of the roof-tops. "I have been pegging away at those early-morning studies for my exhibition."

She smiled incomprehensibly. "Don't let the light get too strong."

He answered bluntly, "What do you mean?"

"Why—you would lose your effect, wouldn't you?"

"I don't think I quite follow you."

"Don't you know that you avoid the daylight?"

"Art is not concerned with facts," he replied.

She turned, but not quickly.

"No, but life is." As he looked around their eyes met. He felt a sense of shock. What was it? Yes . . . he knew now; he was seeing her as he had first seen her. It caught his breath. She was no longer beautiful.

He cried out her name. He groped for the thing that he saw in the depths of her eyes. But even as he strained his sight darkness came and covered it.

"What is it—?" he struggled.

She turned away. "It is—my secret," she answered.



SEVERANCE

By Richard Duffy

THese many days my soul has breathed
New airs and subtle joys;
I've walked in dreams, as one set free
From life's old jar and noise.

The burden of the long, dread years
Your magic hands did raise.
The stifled cry my heart gave forth
Grew glad before your gaze.

I looked and I am parched to taste
The redness of your mouth.
The golden glint athwart your hair
Reflects the ardent south.

But Spring—the promised happy time,
You say will never bloom. . . .
The orchards blighted stand, and stark,
The world is black with gloom.

Alone, then, I my somber path
Must travel sad afar,
Remembering once my soul did hold
Sweet converse with a star!

THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH

By J. Lee Matherson

FROM the high window of her studio Netta looked down into the street. Since four o'clock she had been watching with anxious eyes for a familiar figure, except when she had been listening with suddenly turned head and strained ears for the sound of a familiar knock.

The small apartment, neutral-tinted and rather bare of furniture, was dim and silent save for the restless movement of her fingers against the pane. The girl who lived with her, Lucilla Millburn, had gone out and would not return before evening. Netta had known this when she begged Julian Ashe to come to her that afternoon. Ordinarily she minded Lucilla no more than if she had been a canary-bird. The little chirps and trills, the soft fluttering rustles and sudden high-pitched questions and remarks proceeding from the next room, in no wise disturbed the twilight talks of the two on the board bench beneath the studio-window. Perhaps, indeed, an occasionally enforced whisper made the word or sentence so conveyed carry a doubly dear meaning. At all events Netta had memories of stay-at-home hours quite as mischievously merry and tender as any in the course of the holiday expeditions she and he had sometimes made together.

Today, however, there was no mischief in her. She was excited and troubled, even frightened; and every moment that passed without bringing Julian added to her distress. He was often late, but his present lateness, measured by her anxiety to see him, seemed a deliberate cruelty.

The cheap little alarm-clock on the

cupboard-top had struck the half-hour past six. If he delayed much longer Lucilla might return and Netta's chance of telling him what she had to tell would be gone. The quick Southern blood flamed up into her cheeks and she twisted her hands together impatiently. How could he bear to keep her waiting all this interminable time? He must have understood from her letter that her need of him was urgent! But of course something unforeseen had detained him. He could not help it. It was just an accident. And at this the hot color died down and left her pale. Suppose it were a real accident and he had been hurt? Her heart seemed to turn over, and little sharp pains pricked her wrists and knees. She pictured him at once stretched out unconscious in the ward of some hospital, and herself searching vainly through the city for the least word of him.

At this auspicious moment he knocked, and Netta, having flung open the door, precipitated herself against him with a faint cry.

"Careful, my dear girl," he remonstrated, turning to close it after him. "There might have been somebody in the hall. This old rookery is full of females, ancient and modern, and they all have eyes and tongues, worse luck to them!"

"I thought you were never coming." "You always think I'm dead, or that I don't care for you, when I'm late," he answered amusedly, stooping to kiss her. "Which was it this time?"

"Both."

He laughed and Netta could not

keep back a little smile at her own expense. Then suddenly the troubled lines that his coming had swept away settled again about her mouth and eyes, and she sighed.

"I did so particularly want you not to be late today," she said. "I couldn't bear waiting."

"I'm sorry, dear."

He volunteered no explanation as to what had kept him, and she asked for none. There was a pause during which his eyes were caught by a canvas on her easel—the sketch of a man's head—and he walked toward it, drawing her after him by the hand as if she had been a little child. "Isn't that a new picture?" he inquired.

"No—Yes—That is, you haven't seen it before. It is an old study I got out to look at. Never mind it. I—I want to tell you something, and—and I'm afraid Lucilla will come back before I've finished."

He looked sharply at her.

"Why, you're all white and shaky, bless you," he said. "What has troubled you so? Out with it at once."

Netta let him lead her to their usual place, the bench under the window. She sat bolt upright, one of her hands still in his, the other pressed down on the cushion beside her, her eyes fixed straight in front of her.

"The man I am—engaged to—is coming on from Virginia. He will be here tomorrow." She spoke in a series of gasps. "He says, with good news. That means that—after all these years—he has the money to marry me. I only heard this morning. I can't stop him. What am I to say to him? How can I meet him? Julian, what am I to do?"

She felt his clasp loosen, and she slipped her hand away. She had told herself that he would be angry, furiously angry. That was right, and to be expected. How could he be anything else? She wanted to look at him, but her eyes seemed suddenly too weary to raise. She drooped her head and listened breathlessly for his first word.

After an appreciable hesitation his voice broke the stillness. He appeared to speak with some effort.

"Perhaps he won't stay long," he said.

The sentence slid softly into the quiet of the room, and an ever-widening circle of silence spread from it.

Netta did not answer. Outwardly she was as motionless as a stone image. Inwardly she was in a raging tempest of feeling. She was quick-witted, and she understood. Her heart passionately rejected it, but her mind had taken in the full significance of what she had heard. This, then, was no crisis to him! He was *not* angry! There were no violent protests against her admitting, even for an instant, that she had claims upon her other than this! He did not mind! He did not desire to take, nor propose to have taken, any action in the matter. He merely suggested that his rival might not stay long.

But how could he be passive? He, Julian, who knew well how far she had forgotten her old promises to someone else in the vividness of her love for him? He could not intend to stand aside and leave her to face this situation alone. She had misinterpreted his meaning. It was an insult to his manhood to suppose such a thing possible. Perhaps he had been as angry as she feared, and had spoken from a depth of cold sarcasm she could not fathom. She glanced up at him, but his face was turned away. She touched him to attract his attention.

"You don't understand, Julian. It's not a question of his staying. It's a question of how I shall meet him—what I shall say to him! It will be so awful having to tell him—that—that it's of no use—after all these years! I should have done it before. I know that. But everything between us had become so vague. Just a—a shadow of a bond that seemed hardly to demand breaking. For a long time I'd ceased to think of it as a possibility to be reckoned with. It seemed only a dream of his that he would keep on dreaming, while I had drifted away

from anything but friendship for him. My feeling for you had swallowed up all other feelings. Our love—yours and mine—was the only reality in the world."

The man beside her dropped his head in his hands.

"Don't! Don't! Don't, dear," he said. "I can't stand it."

"Do you think I've behaved so badly?"

"You? Good God, no!"

He jumped to his feet and began striding up and down the room.

"What is it, then?"

"Oh, you make me feel like such a dog!" he cried.

She looked at him with wide, terrified eyes and did not speak.

"I've taken something from you, and from this man," he went on, "that I can never give back."

"You want to give it back, then," she said slowly, and there was a whisper from her head to her heart; "What did I tell you, fool! Why didn't you believe me?"

He made a violent gesture of negation.

"No, no. I don't. But I—can't keep it."

"For some reason I don't know about?"

"You know; but you can't understand it any more than I can."

She caught in her breath with a sort of hiss, and sprang to her feet.

"Oh, the other woman! I thought —idiot that I was!—that I'd made you forget her. What else was I to think? You—you haven't spoken of her—you haven't seemed to think of her for a year or more."

"I know."

"You—you haven't behaved as if you cared for her."

"I know."

"You have appeared to think and care for no one but me."

"I know," he answered for the third time.

"And yet you mean to tell me that in spite of all I've been to you—all we've been to each other——"

"She's still there? Yes; in the

bottom of my heart; and I know that I can't get away—ever—from the loss of her, and the longing for her, and the hope that perhaps some day she might come to care. I thought I could. We have been so happy together, you and I, that sometimes—very often, indeed—I've thought I *had*; and I would have drifted on, selfish beast that I am, drugging myself with the comfort you are to me, and the belief that I was making your life a little less empty—a little more satisfying—but now that we are brought face to face with the necessity for definite action—I can't—I *can't*—I *hate* myself for it, but—I *can't*—"

His voice broke hoarsely on the last word, and he walked away from her and leaned his forehead on his clenched hand against the window-frame. She followed and stood quietly beside him.

"You can't put me in her place? Is that it? Well, I don't want it—her place! I want my own. I'm your flesh-and-blood companion. She is just your ideal."

"It's something more than that, Netta."

"And yet you have seemed so—so very fond of me," she said, with a sort of questioning wistfulness.

"I am. Passionately fond of you."

"But you're willing to let me go?"

"I am *not* willing. The thought of it makes me sick."

"Still, you don't *love* me enough to—I see—a little. I suppose that is the difference between men and women. A man may be 'passionately fond' of a good many women, and only *love* one. And a woman may love, in a sort of way, several men, but the 'passionate fondness' comes only once in her life. It's curious. I wonder why things are arranged like that? It's hard to understand and harder to bear. If only it hadn't come to me about you!"

"Netta," he cried, turning to her and catching her hands, "you break my heart. Don't think you're the only one that suffers."

"Hush!" she exclaimed, drawing back. "There comes Lucilla. I hear her singing on the stairs."

He made a quick step forward.

"But what are you going to do—about him?"

"I don't quite know," she answered gently. "It—it doesn't concern you any more, dear. You—must go."

"Not like this! I've *got* to see you again. Before tomorrow! I'm dining alone with my sister. Let me come back early this evening."

Self-reproach, anxiety for her, a vague jealousy and yet shamefaced relief that she had not again forced him back to his limitations—all these were perceptible in his tone.

"No."

"But I *can't* leave you this way."

"There's nothing else to do."

"Will you telephone to me if you want me? I shall be at home until nine o'clock. We can't say good-bye like this."

"Why not? If we say it at all? I sha'n't want you, Julian. I mustn't want you any more. Our—affair is over."

She wrenched herself away from him as Lucilla's key turned in the lock. She felt too dazed and stunned to think clearly. She was only dimly conscious of the little creature's entrance with an armful of packages and a tongue chirping cheerful exclamations in answer to Mr. Ashe's hurried good-bye. Every fiber of her being seemed to be fastened to the feet that were carrying the man she loved downstairs and out of her life.

Lucilla and she went out, as they generally did in fine weather, for their evening meal. She knew that the people in the restaurant stared curiously at the vivid white and scarlet of her face and the somber excitement in her eyes, but her small companion, with a blessed combination of mental and physical near-sightedness, absorbed herself in her own concerns and noticed nothing.

It was later than usual when they came back to their own street again. Netta had done her best to talk and behave naturally during dinner, but she felt she could not go up to the apartment. She must be alone somewhere

and fight things out with herself. The thought of her room stifled her. She had a feverish desire to be in motion, in the darkness and the night air, while she was trying to bring some order into the chaos of her mind. She pleaded an appointment with the kind old doctor who had once scolded and coddled her through a bad attack of neuritis, and leaving Lucilla at the door of the studio-building she turned her steps uptown.

It was true that she had been feeling ill and unlike herself of late, and that she remembered the doctor's telling her she might go to him in the evening—the time when she had most leisure. But it was also true that she dared not go to him now.

She wanted to cry out her wretchedness to the four winds of heaven. The mortification of her pride, the anguish of her love, the desperateness of her situation—and she must choke them all back into her own heart. She was in dire need of a counselor and friend, but where was she to find one? She had never been very intimate with her fellow-students and Lucilla was much too immature for such confidences. Through the length and breadth of the whole city there was no one to whom she could turn but Julian, and to him she had turned once, and would not turn again. There were other things she might have said to him—heaven help her—but she would never say them now. She would rather die!

Her anger against him burned in her like fire. Every precious hour that they had spent together made his abandonment of her the blacker. The memory of them stabbed her through and through. Scenes! Scenes in a comedy that had suddenly turned tragic! She remembered with scorn his pleadings to come back—for just a moment—that evening. Not to set himself straight with her, not to accept his share of the responsibility of their mistake, but to say "good-bye"; a more lingering, well-rounded good-bye, she supposed, when he would have offered her his friendship, his affection, anything—everything—but the thing

she wanted. She despised him, she hated him, and she longed unspeakably for someone to whom she could pour out her contempt and hatred; to whom she could tell the whole story; show him as he was, and say, "See the kind of thing I've loved!"

She wondered what he was doing now, while she was hastening frantically through the streets. He had dined at home with his sister, the unmarried sister who kept house for him. Probably he was troubled—he could hardly fail to be that—and his sister would notice it, and if she were wise she would try not to speak of it, and if she were foolish—like Netta—she'd want to know about it to comfort him. Comfort him? It was not he who needed it most! If there were any comfort to be found in the world this desolate evening it should be *hers*. And the thought flashed into her mind that she would go to Miss Ashe. Who had a closer right to judge between them—between her wrongs and Julian's rights? She would go to his sister. Netta's acquaintance with her was slight, but she believed her to be an upright and generous-minded woman, who would at least listen to her and tell her what she ought to do; what her duty to herself and her duty to others demanded.

She looked back at the clock in the steeple of a church she had just passed. It was not yet nine. Julian had said he would be at home until that time, and she must run no risk of meeting him. She would give herself another half-hour of wandering. But now that she had made up her mind to the interview her heart began to beat violently with the anticipation of it, and she felt all of a sudden curiously weak and shaken. She was afraid she could not go on walking all that weary while. An empty omnibus came rumbling and bouncing up the Avenue and she hailed it and got in. She would go as far as it went and come back again. There was a kind of dazed peace in its crawling progress, and now that she could sit still she realized the full extent of her tiredness.

The excitement seemed to have died out of her and only a dull glow of determination to be left by the time she found herself once more in the neighborhood of the Ashes' house. As the omnibus stopped she saw Julian's tall figure swing round the corner and down Fifth avenue. The mere sight of him moved her so that she trembled and could hardly breathe. Perhaps he was going to her now? The rush of her spirit toward him almost carried her with it. But her reason held her back. If he *were* going to her, what difference could it make? What difference! She knew how he felt. Supposing him to be prepared for self-sacrifice, did she want him as a victim? Fiercely she shut her teeth together, turned her eyes from following after him, and hurried down the side street. What she was going to do might not be fair, but the pain she bore had grown too acute to be denied expression. She felt she should go mad if she did not speak. Another woman must hear, and judge, and—if possible—sympathize; must recognize that she was not entirely to blame.

A surprised servant admitted that Miss Ashe was at home, left Netta in a little red, picture-hung reception-room off the hall, and presently returned with the request that she would walk upstairs. She found herself mounting slowly after him as if in a dream, her eyes burning, her throat dry, broken sentences of explanation—of confession—of accusation flickering through her mind. How should she begin? How should she present her case most justly and most swiftly?

"Forgive my coming. . . . There is no one else to go to. . . . I am in great trouble. . . . The man I've been engaged to for years is coming tomorrow. . . . And I've learned to love your brother—to love Julian—with all my heart and body, with all my soul and strength. He's taken everything—everything I could give, and now it seems he can give me nothing in return. He's going to let me go. How can I face it? What am I to do?"

The portière was being held back for her before she was aware, and she became conscious of a charming room, half library, half drawing-room—of a surrounding of bookcases, easy-chairs, shaded lamps, fresh flowers, and of a tall, fair woman with gray eyes and lines of gentle sadness about her mouth, who came forward to greet her.

"I'm very glad to see you. How many times we've managed to miss each other!"

Netta took the outstretched hand mechanically.

"I—I've always been so sorry," she murmured, trying to read in the pleasant, calm face whether Miss Ashe considered her presence at this hour in any way remarkable.

Apparently she did not, for she continued graciously: "You don't know how nice I think it is of you to come to me like this. I do not go out much. I am very apt to be alone in the evening, and you can imagine how I appreciate a companion."

She had drawn a comfortable chair forward as she spoke and was amiably introducing it to her visitor's notice.

Netta thanked her and sank into it. The safe, sheltered, complacent civility that seemed to set her and her troubles as far apart from the inmate of this quiet room as the East is from the West, made any but the most conventional manner appear impossible.

"Julian was here a few moments ago," his sister went on. "He has only just gone out, and he'll be so sorry when I tell him he's missed you."

Netta winced. Somehow the simple assumption that a warm sort of friendship might very well exist between her insignificant self and Miss Ashe's brother stung and wounded—stung, because it so completely ignored the possibility of anything more; wounded because of what the reality had become. How was she to make this gentle, prim, protected woman see things as she saw them; understand life and its temptations, disappointments and dangers as she had to understand and face them?

"I hope you will forgive me," she began, breaking into speech with the

directness she had planned. "I came because I am in—great difficulty and distress, and I thought—perhaps—you might help me."

Miss Ashe was taken aback. Like most sensitive, reticent people she shrank from emotion either in herself or others, and she found herself absolutely afraid of it in this strange, handsome young creature who looked so haggard, so unhappy, so defiant.

"I? Oh, yes, if I can—of course," she faltered, drawing compassionate, worried brows together. "I will do my best, but I'm afraid I am not a very good adviser. I wish Julian were here."

The utter helplessness expressed in her involuntary glance toward the door, the little forlorn gesture, as if her spirit failed her without the support of his, were not lost upon her visitor.

"He's such a help when one's in trouble," his sister went on in soft-voiced eulogy. "It seems to me that nobody *understands* as he does. Most lawyers get a hard sort of insight into human nature, but he has the intuition and tenderness of a woman besides all a man's clear-headedness. I needn't say this to you, though, who know him so well, need I? You must have felt it just as I do."

Netta's heart swelled with bitterness. A help in time of trouble! She had not found him so. Oh, if this other woman knew, if she *knew* how he had made her suffer! Words beat against her lips, but she forced them back, for Miss Ashe had begun to speak again.

"Perhaps," she said timidly, "it is really Julian you wished to consult. A great many people come here to see him."

Netta gave a queer little laugh that was half a sob.

"No. I did not come to consult Mr. Ashe. You see, I know already what he would—and would not—say."

"You've spoken to him then? And you want me to advise you differently? Oh, I don't think I could do that. I'm a fool about him, I know, but I am quite sure I'm right to beg you to trust his judgment. He's so strong and—

so kind. I can't imagine his being wrong."

The look on her face struck the girl dumb. The woman adored her brother and the thought of how she, Netta, was about to hurt and perhaps destroy all this faith and affection came upon her with a sudden sick pang. In her first fury of suffering she had overlooked this side of the case. How could she have been so blind? How had she imagined that she could stand face to face with Julian's sister and speak ill of Julian? What comfort could there be for her here? And if it were revenge she had desired, on whom would it fall most sharply? She was panic-stricken. Oh, she must get away! She must get away without betraying herself!

"I won't consult you then," she said, trying to force a semblance of gaiety into her voice. "If you 'advised me differently' it would be dreadful. After all, we have to decide most things for ourselves, haven't we? I was selfish to come to you. It was just because you were another woman, and I wanted—well, I believe I wanted to complain about things that—that can't be helped—in a way one's ashamed to do before a man."

"Oh, but if you wanted—I mean, if I *really* could help—I should be glad—indeed I should," cried Miss Ashe with impulsive self-reproach. Her conscience pricked her lest she should seem to have repelled the confidence she dreaded. "Do complain, if you think it will do you good," she said putting a kindly hand on the girl's arm.

Netta shook her head, smiling. "It's done me quite enough good to think I was going to. And it wasn't worth while. I sometimes work myself up so over trifles when they affect me personally. I suppose that's human nature. To see one's own side, to take one's own part, to believe someone else is to blame for the things that hurt."

"I don't see how we can help being affected by things that hurt us," said the other with gentle gravity, "and very often we can only escape them by hurting other people. But we needn't do that. We can keep from what some-

one calls 'the cowardice of self-preservation.' Julian quoted it tonight."

Netta's great, tragic eyes blazed at her.

"The cowardice of self-preservation," she echoed. "That is a good phrase from—of Mr. Ashe's. I will remember it. He did not say it to me. Good night, and thank you for seeing me."

"Must you go?"

"Yes. It's later than I thought. Don't—don't tell your brother I came, will you? He might think it was—cowardly."

She hardly knew how she got out of the house. Her mind seemed to take no cognizance of outside things. But she presently found herself in the street, walking rapidly, with Julian's phrase ringing in her ears.

"The cowardice of self-preservation."

How simply his sister had used it! How little she could imagine its application to Julian himself! And how it fitted! Oh, how it fitted! Netta heard herself laugh aloud as she repeated it, remembering their interview of the afternoon and his prompt withdrawal from all responsibility toward her in the very face of her appeal. He had been sorry. Oh, yes, he had been sorry. She must do him that justice. And it had hurt him to see himself in her eyes for once unglorified. She could hear again the shame in his voice. "I hate myself for it, but—I can't."

He couldn't, and yet he was "passionately fond of her." How he must love—that other person—Netta writhed away from the idea of her—and how he must despise himself! Perhaps it was in a mood of the blackest self-reproach and condemnation that he had spoken of cowardice. She had known him in such moods, brief but bitter, and had helped him to fight them. Oddly enough she felt a sudden pang of something like pity for him; of jealousy that this time she had not been there to help as she had always done. Perhaps it was her own belief in him, her conviction that he *must* be all a woman demanded in the man she

cared for that had done the mischief. If she had trusted her fears, instead of her hopes! Sometimes she had had fears. Oh, what was the use of looking back! He had failed her utterly, and her life lay in ruins between them. Her life and another. There was the present to face and she felt too numb to think what she should do.

"The cowardice of self-preservation."

Well, she, too, had been cowardly. She would have saved herself and her happiness if she could, and left the man who loved her to face the loss of his as best he might. How awful it was, this thing that possessed men and women, and made them torture one another! If he felt for her as she felt for Julian? If she were condemning him to the very agony she was enduring? She had thought she could not let a dog suffer as she was suffering.

She'd do her best, her best, her *best* to be good to him. Yes, that was the thing she could do. Not let him be hurt as she was hurt. Give him the comfort that she had been denied. Keep from him, as long as she could at any cost, the fact that all feeling was dead in her and that she would never care for anything or anybody again. Surely that was possible. Tomorrow; that would be for tomorrow, and tonight she would go home and sleep.

As she slowly went up the stairs to her apartment she saw Lucilla leaning over the banisters in a flutter of excitement.

"What has kept you so long, Netta? I've been looking for you every minute. There's someone waiting to see you. No. Not Mr. Ashe," reading the name that leaped, and flashed, and faded in the upturned face—"a stranger."

"A stranger?"

"To me, I mean. He says he's an old friend of yours."

Netta fell back a step.

"Not tonight. Oh, God, not tonight!"

"What did you say, Netta? What is the matter with you? You nearly lost your balance; and you look—why, you look frightened."

"I'm—just—surprised. Let me—let me go to him, dear."

"He said you did not expect him till tomorrow," observed Lucilla, following her into the room.

He was standing near the door; a short, square-shouldered, determined-looking man; and he caught Netta by both hands as she entered.

"Is it really you? It doesn't seem possible! Let me look at you. Oh, how glad—how *glad* I am to be here! At last! At such long last." He heaved a great sigh. "Hasn't it been unthinkably long, Netta?"

"Yes; but the time has slipped past us somehow," she answered gently, trying to smile as she met his eyes.

"It hasn't slipped past *me*," he exclaimed, with a grim laugh. "It has weighed me down every hour with the sense of my impotence and its power. Suppose you'd changed? Suppose you ceased to believe in me? But you couldn't do that—"

She shook her head because no words would come, and he rushed on.

"Of course you couldn't do that. You'd have known I'd never give up till I'd won. And I *have*. It's dogged that does it, and I've won. In spite of time. We won't let it keep us apart another week, shall we, Netta?"

"No," she answered, facing him bravely. "We won't let it keep us apart any longer than—than you say."

He looked at her tenderly and triumphantly, and again she tried to smile.

"We've had quite enough to bear, haven't we?" she said.

"We," he echoed. "Oh, you dear thing, how I like that '*we*.' Have you missed me? Have you wanted me? Not as I have you, but a little? Now I see you again I know that I *never* could have let you go. That I couldn't have faced my life without you. Sometimes, down there, I used to be afraid. But here I am and here *you* are, and you haven't changed a bit, except that you are much paler than you used to be."

He broke off abruptly, searching her face with his eyes. She murmured

something about being tired that night—not having felt very strong lately, and turned away from him to lay aside her jacket. Lucilla silently took it from her and slipped away toward the next room. Netta dared not detain her. She understood too well what he was feeling; all he was longing to say. She was so conscience-stricken, so sorry for him; she wanted so desperately not to hurt him. Yet her very soul sickened within her. She had thought every feeling was dead. But—if he touched her!

The sudden frenzy of repulsion that swept over her was absolutely terrifying. She had not imagined anything like this. She had not thought! She had not dreamed! Her hands clenched themselves and her breath came short. The door shut behind Lucilla, and he sprang forward.

"Say you're glad to see me, Netta!" he cried passionately, holding out his arms.

An hour later he was gone, and she stood face to face with herself looking into the glass over the chimneypiece. She stared at her reflection wonderingly, as if it told her unbelievable things.

She had lied in every word and action as the occasion presented itself. She had agreed to everything he proposed, given him promise for promise, enthusiasm for enthusiasm. She had gone step by step, year by year, over his life since they parted, sympathizing and commanding. She had looked forward with apparent eagerness, and planned with him all the details of the life they were to lead together. He had left her holding himself with new erectness, alert, proud, happy, congratulating himself, adoring her, utterly satisfied and at peace with the world. He had returned twice from the door to tell her that these sixty minutes more than made up to him for the whole six years.

That was over! And that was all! It was of no use. She could not do it any more than Julian could do it.

She understood better now how one could fail oneself and the person who loved one. It was something within that fell back appalled at the sacrifice. One could not help oneself. Men were different, of course, in many ways, but yet—perhaps—Julian's *spirit*, faithful in spite of him, had recoiled from her, as she had recoiled and shrunk *bodily* from—Oh, why were women made like this? She dared not trust herself with him again. The thought of what she had endured grew and swelled into a perfect madness of rebellion. She felt like a rat caught in a trap. Where was she to look for release? The future she had hoped for was impossible. The future she had tried to accept was impossible. Her present life with Lucilla would soon become impossible. Where was she to go? What was she to do?

She bowed her head and her folded arms down upon the mantelpiece and broke into a very desperation of bitter weeping.

The sound of a脚步 in the hall and his voice at the door roused her.

"Netta, don't think me a perfect fool. I had to come back. I felt as if you might vanish into thin air if—Netta! Darling! What is it? What has happened?"

A passionate impulse rose in her and she turned to him. Julian had failed. She had failed. But there was just this one last chance. He might not fail.

"Oh, forgive me," she said. "I know how I'm going to hurt you, for I have been hurt so. Forgive me, and comfort me, if you can. Just as you love me I've loved someone else; just as desperately; just—entirely, utterly. I think I can get over it if you will help me. He—he does not care so much for me. And I want you to have all you want. I will try so hard. But when a woman has given all—has given everything—"

She felt herself stagger as his shoulder struck hers, and the last thing she remembered was the clutch of his hands at her throat.

IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS

By John Winwood

AS SHE IMAGINED IT

HE—How charming it is to be alone here with the firelight and the shadows, and you. How beautiful you are tonight—how more than beautiful! Oh, Marian, cannot you guess what I have come to say?

HERSELF—? ? ? ?

HE—Marian, I love you!

AS IT WAS

HE—How charming it is to be here in the firelight with your father and your mother and your sister and yourself. I do not know, Mr. Jones, when I have spent a more enjoyable or instructive evening. Concerning the attitude of Congress on the Brownsville incident, now— What, is it really so late? I must be going. Good night all.

II

AS SHE IMAGINED IT

HERSELF—Dear Uncle Billions, I have just heard the sad news and hastened to you. Surely you are a little better this morning?

UNCLE BILLIONS—No, no, my child. I shall never be better. Come closer, Marian; I wish to speak to you. You were always my favorite niece and I have left you everything—the money, the house, the yacht are yours and yours only. Good-bye, child; I am sinking rapidly.

AS IT WAS

THE DOCTOR—Can you see Mr. Billions? Certainly—when he comes back. He is so much better that I have sent him for a drive in the Park. Nothing to worry about—not at all. I stake my professional reputation that he is good for twenty years yet.

III

AS SHE IMAGINED IT

HERSELF—I am sorry you take it so to heart, Edyth, but I knew from the first that he wasn't a marrying man, and I'm not surprised that he left without saying anything definite. You must simply be philosophical. There are as good fish in the sea, you know.

AS IT WAS

EDYTH—You're one of the first I've told. Isn't the ring a beauty?

THE WONDERFUL MOOD

By Mrs. Henry Dudeney

PROLOGUE

IT was so late that the house had grown silent—save for mysterious creaks and groans—all the vague, spectral sounds of a sleeping dwelling.

Julie felt that she would never sleep again. She turned her head to the smooth bed and stared at it and shivered. To sleep meant to wake—and to wake meant to begin afresh; to take up the dun garment of daily duty and wear it with a grace. To sleep, to wake—to begin afresh! All down the strained ages, this has seemed to many the impossible task.

To sit here at the open window, staring at the sea, meant that she conserved for a little while, anyway, the wonderful mood of the morning; caught at the magic trail of its departing robe. She looked out at the sea. In the morning it had been her friend; tonight it was an enemy—and laughed. It mocked her woe, showed her the grotesque side of this tragedy. To every tragedy there is a cap and bells. She laughed, too; she could not help it. She kept her prevailing sense of humor.

Her heart was broken—broken. But the world should never know. For the rest of her life she would be more brilliant than she had ever been—and bitter! Yes, she would be gall.

She was utterly bored with life—as it was going to be after that one blinding flash of what it might have been. She was so bored that the relieving idea of suicide came—and the amused sea nodded assent. Yet she dismissed it as vulgar, as futile, she shrank from the cheap horror of this solution. Every fool at bay commit-

ted suicide—a *bourgeois* method of escape.

I

THEY were together on the beach, midway through the rapt and idle morning. Julie asked for nothing else in the way of mornings for the rest of her life. She had worked so hard in her forty years; worked hard and won. She had breathed big cities. To slouch upon this lonely beach on the softly passionate west coast; sometimes to sit up and pretend to sew, but mostly to lie flat and tilt the brim of your hat over your eyes and listen to the waves—life had never before given anything half so exquisite. The thought that Winter would come—and working days and parting—was insupportable. It nearly stopped her heart. She would not think. For the present, here was hot August and here, too, was the beloved.

There was a flush in her cheek not kissed there by the sun. Yet at forty, with a ripe mind and a subtle brain, why trouble to deceive oneself? Why play gawky girl with one's mental admissions? She loved Frank Vickary—and he need never know.

It must be love; this joy, these spells of strange silence, this thrilling sense of new life which was something even younger than youth. At eighteen she had never known it; at eighteen she had been eager for Fame.

And if she loved him—why? Probably because he was a fighter, he brought into her life the strong simplicity of a truculent man. He

brought mental health and breeziness; for twenty years she had been living under glass. He was primitive; some people—those shallow people that the world calls smart—might have voted him stupid. Yet he was nothing of the kind; he was subtle—but not by cultured application. He had gained his deep knowledge of human nature at first hand, in strange lands and by his desperate calling. He had seen men wounded, seen them die; marked heroes, sighted a coward on occasion, knew the full meaning of the word patriotism. These teach men more than books.

Yet he was certainly primitive, this big fighting fellow. Julie loved to mark his boyish, puzzled look when she said something clever; one of those tinsel paradoxes with which her world in London was full. The people with whom she jostled could not even ask you to pass the salt without infusing wit into common desire. Brilliance was a disease with them all—painfully acquired. She was weary of it, sick to death.

Now this man beside her on the beach was a rough soldier, had lived and fought in savage lands; was burned all through with tropical sun. He knew nothing of books or pictures, was silent in a drawing-room. His hands were empty without a weapon.

Julie lay looking at the world—it was half upside down and all the colors she saw—blue and amber—were doubly brilliant.

She watched the swelling, tawny sail of a fishing-smack, far, far out. Everything else, save the sun and the sail, was blue—of sky; was break—of waves; was breeze—that carried salt. The wave and the little fleet wind so sang together that you could not sort them.

"They are David and Jonathan," she said, sitting up suddenly and laughing. "Why does one sprawl on a beach? It is permissible; on a lawn, it would strike the wrong note. You can't imagine a correct garden party—prone. What is *de rigueur* for shingle is scandal for grass."

"What is, and who are David and Jonathan?"

"The wind and the waves; they will not be divided. I spread before you a constant meal of verbal absurdities."

She surveyed him, her head on one side, her hands clasped loosely round her knees. She was a woman who might one day look exquisitely old—all fine web of delicate wrinkle, a face of lace—but she would never look middle-aged. Nature had spared her that and she pressed Art freely into her service to assure this exemption. She was a London woman—of reputation; she had her certain place in society—good looks and comparative youth were an asset. She knew quite well and used with skill and unquenchable refinement all those little courtesies which Art holds out for the consolation of women on the wane.

She would never look middle-aged. Her fortune lay in expression, not coloring. In certain lights, in happy moods she could put a young girl to the blush with her joyous youth. At other times when she was tired—of work, of the mob of professional wits, of publicity—a woman of sixty might have appeared a positive *débutante* beside her. A creature of extremes! A woman never meant for public life!

Frank Vickary had never seen her tired to death—with talking; never seen her as the well-known social reformer; the woman who wrote articles of penetrating insight in serious reviews and spoke with such incisive wit on platforms. He disliked that sort of thing, was strange with it. He did not know that side of her; he had heard of it from her widowed sister with whom they were both staying in a furnished house here by the sea, and he deplored it. To his elementary demand, a woman was merely a lovely taper for the lighting of a man's home.

He only knew her as she had been on every yellow Summer day for the last three weeks: something more exquisitely youthful than a girl—a finished feminine product and yet so new, so uncrumpled. He gave her brains no credit for her charm. To him, she was something

witch, yet more angel. He watched the drifting color of her face, the chasing lights in her dark eyes, the little arch-lifted corners of her mouth—they were elusive webs of mystery. Her face was never still, nor her eloquent hands. She talked more with her eyes and hands than with her tongue. A perfect mistress of the moods—and so holding the secret of perpetual youth.

He loved her; not for her brains, not for her reputation—as his wife, he would demand that she subserved both. He loved her because to him she was something better than pretty and because he could not for the life of him help it! That is always the one, the only reason.

Her bright eyes were everything that a woman's should be; they were sweet, they were bright, they burned you up and yet melted you in a single glance. They had, moreover, the invincible trick of calling; they brought a man to his knees. He knelt—to stars.

He was no tactician; in love, as in war, he brought in the inevitable blunder-buss effect. He could not hope to meet her many moods, or ever fence with her in this eternal matter of the heart. He must blurt out the truth and take his chance; he strung himself for defeat—or victory?

"Julie!"—her name this first time was so exquisite on his tongue—"you must have seen—you are not a fool—if I am."

"Seen?"

Her eyes were afraid and triumphant, and oh, how eager!

"I love you."

He instilled all the simplicity which those three words demand. How many millions of men have said them—and will!

For her? She was nonplussed. She had no word—no, not one; this creature of perpetual speech, this woman with whom words were so rich and ready. She had a pen that flew and a tongue that darted—but not now.

How fast the yellow world spun round! How the blue waves and the

salt sea breeze mingled! Every breeze and every breaker laughed—to tears. He loved her. She wanted to clap her hands and cry; she wanted to run along the beach and shout like a little girl.

Other men had said so and imagined that they meant it. She might have married more than once. But the others had loved her for her brains, this one for her beauty. A man never loves for anything else; if beauty does not exist in the coveted object, he thinks it does. It is there for his eyes to see. Passion has no part with Esteem. People fall in love because they cannot help it—because they are exquisitely mad for the time being. It is a gift, rare, this beautiful foolery. Most of us are cursed with perpetual sanity.

"You love me?"

"I want you for my wife," he said stoutly—and the jubilation of a victor ran in his voice—for her eyes were telling.

His hand was lying on the shingle—empty; she loved that hand, it wasn't branded with art in any form. It was simple, the first type of hand; Adam probably had one just like it. She was so tired of the trade-marks of talent—the sculptor's broad thumb, the upturned finger-tips of the musician, all the tokens of neurotic capacity. Here, on the shingle was sanity and sane fight; simplicity, the obvious.

"Your wife?" she said foolishly.

"Yes—you will?"

"Will—what?"

"Marry me, Julie?"

"Marry, marry!" She drew close together the delicate black brows that he was forever watching. "I put all that behind me—a hundred years ago. I bartered it for a—Career. A shoddy bargain! You truly love me—why?"

"Because I can't help it—and don't want to help it; because you are so sweet. You are irresistible, perfect. I've seen many a tropical flower, but none with your color, your strangeness. Humming-birds have not the flash of your eyes."

Her heart responded to this; her

eager face was jewel and star together. He was a positive poet, this rugged soldier of many lands; a rough-and-tumble creature, scars and fighting. A poet! Love had made him so—love for her. Love! A perfect gift! Love makes a man wise and fills him with beautiful fancy! The plainest man is a peacock of the emotions while he woos. Love! She looked up gratefully at the sky.

To be a wife and then to think of a Career—a hectic platform and scribbling life! What a vanity and an evasion it had all been, what an appalling thinness and dearth! And at eighteen she had imagined it was going to be so beautiful. Let London go up in flames if it chose. Let it perish—with Babylon and all the other sinful cities of history.

"A bride should be young, and I am old," she said wistfully, suddenly remembering and on the point of tears. That was her April way; for ever to laugh or to weep. If one could be but eighteen, here on the yellow beach with a soldier!

"Old! Look at you!"

His ardent eyes were eating her up—curve by curve, tint by tint.

"I should like to make a mirror and show you my new-found bride. For you are mine, Julie. I read consent in your eyes."

"Eyes say more than the tongue dare," she admitted—and her glad, shy glance danced before him.

"I love your hair. It is so massive, grows caressingly at the temples. Old! You are younger to me than any girl I ever met. You always will be."

"Always—really, truly?" she said childishly.

"Always, always."

After this assurance she took idolatry grandly; the true woman does. And she was so incorrigibly feminine; it had never been her real nature to speak on platforms, to write in papers, to strive for the good of the working classes and the downtrodden small tradesman. She did not truly care a jot for any of them—or ever had. She cared only for perfect, extra-

gant worship. This is the true woman's way; she is a queen; the man her eager, happy slave. Julie was living—late—her moment. The wonderful mood of it seized her. Like all late things it was doubly exquisite; late roses, a little late child.

II

SHE lived the wise, modulated days of a woman to whom middle life is a definitely approaching foe, and her public career had been such stress that she was fussy in little physical things. It was her habit to sleep every afternoon in a darkened room and appear with a fresh armory of ethereal, simulated girlishness at tea-time.

When she awoke on the day of the wonderful mood, a real girl was standing close, and the likeness to herself was so startling—so cruel and sad—that, although it was nothing new, she nervously pushed the tumbled hair from her brow and frowned. This girl's fresh face was a blow—in a way it had never before been. It was insolent in its perfect youth; twenty years ago her own had been just like it. Twenty years!

"Aunt Julie! I wished to speak to you alone."

Aunt! How old it sounded—how respectable and spinster!

"My head aches, Marian. Is it anything of importance?"

"The highest," the girl laughed. She sat herself down at the end of the bed, with an air of desperate boldness; it covered anguished shyness. "I want to speak to you about Captain Vickary. Can't you guess?"

"I am no good at guessing—nursery conundrums."

"I suppose," Marian's eyes flashed, "that he is fascinated by your brains and—"

"He dislikes brains, my child; the best men do. He probably regards mine in the nature of a closet skeleton. Go on."

There were instant dimples at Marian's cheek. The elder woman watched them. She had been dimpled once.

"Does he?" said Marian. "I'm so glad, so relieved."

"Did you come upstairs to give voice to your relief?"

"You make it hard for me, Aunt Julie. Do you do it on purpose?"

"I do very little on purpose. My life is an offering to the impromptu."

"Dear Aunt Julie, you are old but—but—I don't want to say anything unkind."

"You couldn't. I am old—beyond measure, but I remain a woman. Is that what you are trying to say?"

Julie's eyes, so sweet to Vickary a few hours before, so childish and glad, changed. They were old and hard and weary.

"Something like it," Marian nodded; she made a cup for her pretty, young face with her curved hands and then suddenly slid both downward to her heart and there held them—she had all Julie's impetuous, entrancing gestures.

"I thought," she continued, "that he was dazzled by your brilliance. I thought men liked a clever woman however old she was."

"You talk in riddles, my dear, and with a tincture of impertinence which I suppose I ought to resent."

"But you never resent, Aunt Julie. You are so different from mama. I could not tell her—anything."

"Tell her—what?"

"Nothing—definite. You are merely plaguing me. Well, then, it is this." The child looked blunt and boyish. "I thought, before you came, that Captain Vickary was—was—"

"Go on, dear child. What—was Captain Vickary?"

"The words are being dragged out of me and you won't help. I thought he was falling in love with me. There!"

"Has he told you so?"

"Told me! They do not need to tell for one to—suspect. If, when you were young, you had ever been in love you would understand."

"I never was in love—when I was young."

"I suppose you were too clever. You say men hate brains and—"

"Captain Vickary does."

"Then I can guess," said Marian triumphantly, "what he has been talking about to you every morning on the beach. He must have a confidante; one reads about it in novels."

"The people who write novels never were in love—when they were young," said Julie.

She had written a novel herself; everyone of prominence in her world did that, just once. She recalled it; a wooden performance enough. She sprang up, leaning on her elbows, looking haggard and eager and twinkling—a weird mixture of a very young woman and an extremely old one.

"Marian—listen. I will tell you what Captain Vickary has been saying. For one thing, he admires dark hair—the way it grows, the massive look of it."

Marian nodded; she turned her head on her shoulder toward the glass.

"He said, too, that brown eyes were the sweetest in the world."

"How good of you to listen, Aunt Julie!"

"A complexion all moods is his unfailing joy."

"How charming! Did he put it just like that? I am always changing color. And you listened, like a patient, fond old dear, and approved?"

"I listened—and approved."

"I suppose," said Marian, knotting the fringe of the quilt very fast, "that I ought, according to novels, to have had my tongue cut out before I said a word—as he hasn't. You think me—bold?"

"Bold! No, I understand—and novels don't," said Julie kindly.

How well she understood! She saw the faint reflex of her own wonderful mood of the morning.

"I could not endure suspense," said Marian piteously. "It became unbearable. I knew he could not be in love with you—and yet! And all the time he has simply been raving over dark hair. Delightful!"

"He adores dark hair," said Julie, looking out straight from the pillow.

"How tragic you sound! Yours

was just as pretty once, I don't doubt."

What skilled, unconscious warriors these children were!

"You look tired to death," continued Marian; "all drawn and gray."

"You woke me up before my time, that is all. Run off now and leave me in peace. I will not come down to tea. Send it up."

"Very well, and I will go in a minute. But kiss me first; I want tenderness."

"Tenderness! The demand of the whole world; a bitter hunger, always unsatisfied."

"Don't put on your platform manner. I want you to be kind, to comfort me."

"What can I say, or do?"

"If you ask, the case is hopeless," said Marian.

She walked, with absurd young dignity, to the door; with the handle turned, she went on:

"When mama told me that an old brother officer of poor papa's was invalided home and coming on a long visit I thought I should be bored to death, and I—I wasn't. Are you cross with me, Aunt Julie? Are you very shocked? You lie there looking like a mountain-peak—gaunt, aloof, frozen."

"Cross! What a word! Not I."

"You see," pursued the girl, with a superior air, "I am the kind of person who must have love. I should never be content, as you have been, with reputation."

The mature woman on the bed flinched afresh. She had a smart answer all ready and could have rapped it out—but didn't. To be laughed at, despised, affectionately ridiculed to her very face, this was to be her fate. And the mood of the morning had been so wonderful.

"There must be women of your simple stamp to make the world go round," she said, "but—"

"We are a little boring to women of yours?"

"Exactly. You are deaf with your tongue, Marian. I should like a cup of tea and solitude."

"You send me away empty—of tenderness."

"I don't stock it. Remember that when I was young I did not fall in love so incorrigibly, so candidly, so—unasked."

Marian flushed a wounded scarlet.

"I deserve that thrust; but I couldn't help it—I should do the same again. Dear Aunt Julie, if you are not tender, you are infinitely wise. What shall I do—first—when I get to the other side of this door? Where shall I go?"

She twinkled. Julie saw herself as she had been on the beach this morning. Only this morning?

"There is the beach," she said, smiling in a stiff, false way at the young shape near the door.

Marian nodded.

"Yes. And Captain Vickary is there. He went down directly after lunch, when you left us. And since I know for certain that for three whole weeks he has talked of nothing but my hair—"

"He talked also of sweet brown eyes," said Julie.

"Exactly. Why, then, I'll go to—the beach. Good-bye."

III

JULIE would not go down again that day; she pleaded headache, and shut her door firmly against Marian. Her sister came and fussed about her; this woman of her own generation made her feel immeasurably old and ridiculous: relations have this galling knack.

When the house was quiet, everyone in bed and sleeping, she struggled up and sat at the window—wondering; staring at the sea and asking it. She thought vaguely of suicide—life was over, just when it had promised to begin. But suicide was too violent, too definite for such an ethereal denial as hers was going to be; it was inartistic.

Presently the door of the French window just beneath opened and Captain Vickary came out. He, too, stood staring at the sea. She watched him—

picking up her courage thread by thread, making of it a fabric stout enough for her purpose. Then she leaned out and called him. He turned on his heel with military precision; he seemed always to wear spurs. She fancied that his eyes, but more his manner, threw forth a certain coldness, a sense of the regretful. But it really did not matter—her mind was made up.

"Are you awake? I could not sleep either," he said.

"Go into the drawing-room and stay—until I come down," she whispered back. "I must speak to you; the occasion is unusual—but so am I. The conventional for me is in abeyance. I may be ten minutes—more—getting ready. Mind you wait—I may be ten hours."

When she said this, she laughed and he looked perplexed.

"Very well." He turned back to the window. "You won't be long and you will be quiet? It is late and I should not like to disturb your sister. She is an invalid, we must remember."

"I will be everything that is silent, decorous, kind, and I will forget nothing."

Her head drew in at the lattice.

She plunged into the most tragic twenty minutes of her life. She set her teeth, laughed a little—cried more—and began.

How tragedy and farce touched finger-tips! Had a woman ever done just this before? Or was she the very first—and the most courageous, the most whimsical, ever born? It was the fashion to suppose that this old world had seen, done, been—everything. She wondered.

"Your dark hair—so massive!" He had said that only this morning.

She took it down, brushed it flat—into savage sleekness; until she looked like the Madonna of some old master, but gone lean, gone wild. She took out the pins, the combs; she robbed it of a little curl here, a wave there, a tress somewhere else. She was going to be candid, to be immaculately truthful.

The pathetic tragedy of the middle-aged woman—and the roaring farce! She had never looked at it in that light before; these little aids had been defensible, inconsiderable—and yet all-important—until one was beloved: then they instantly became a sham, a lie; an outrage to the limpid, wonderful mood. She stripped herself of all the little beguiling aids to youth—those insouciant lies that the women of her type tell daily.

Finally she took off her tea-gown—of French cunning and most elusive charm—and slipped into another; a homely, comfortable thing made by a cheap dressmaker: one of those ductile little English oddities who industriously make up garments to ladies' own designs—either in the customer's back parlor or their own. It was a garment shewore when she was alone and not feeling quite up to the mark—the mood when nothing matters and you intend to see no one but relations, who are neither disillusioned nor deceived. Moods! How wonderful hers had been—this morning!

She was ready—for sacrifice. It was the most tremendous sacrifice a woman could make. It was the most agonizing form of martyrdom, this—to slay Love with Candor. And such a sweet, late-born Love as hers had been!

She looked at herself critically, pitilessly in the glass. She looked older—or was it only different? She saw nothing angular nor hard—not a trace of the typical platform and scribbling woman; that monstrosity created by and beloved of the caricaturist. She was half in love with her pensive self. Her clear skin and her bright eyes had always been completely her own. She could do no more. She was going down. She would tell Love no lies.

Vickary was standing by the drawing-room window, in a masculine attitude of utter perplexity and faint annoyance.

"Julie!" he wheeled round.

She stood quite still in the frame of the door—a suppliant, quivering creature waiting for the knife. Then, lift-

ing her head and moving quickly she went up close to him, with a childish look on her face—and a background of the bitterest tragedy.

"Look at me—hard. I have come down—so—for you to see."

"You came down for me to see? I imagined that you came down to—to apologize, although the hour is unusual, as you said yourself."

"I said the occasion was—so it is—unique. Apologize! Yes—if you employ the word. It is a crude word—but according to your blunt, brave calling. Yet you weren't a soldier, this morning. Your heart was in mufti, anyway."

"We are playing at cross-purposes, Julie."

"We were—this morning. Look at me!"

"I thought we were candid this morning—divinely so," he said, looking at her in obedience, and marking that she flinched and seemed to crouch.

"You mean this afternoon?"

"This afternoon! That is my grievance against you," he said. "It may have been coquetry, but it wasn't comfortable. Two mortal hours on the beach—our beach—with that foolish child. Not a word to say for herself, her ridiculous head stuffed with cheap novels, not one sweet, wavering line of history in her pretty face. How fresh she is! Eighteen is wonderful. Why did you hide yourself away from me, Julie? And yet I adored you for hiding."

"Eighteen is wonderful," she said, looking at him steadily. "Marks of history! The brutal hoof of all the years is stamped into my face. Marian is perfect. Sweet eyes, massive hair! Those terms fit her—not me. Look—and be cured."

She smiled up in a wavering way—April not sure of its own mind.

"Listen! Poor little Marian is in love with you. She told me so this afternoon."

"And you sent her down to our beach. Quixotic!"

"Merely truthful. I deplore the anomalous. I am forty—forty, do you hear? What a prose total! I want

you to know everything, for us to start—or, rather, finish—clear."

"Forty! Your sister told me so before you came."

"Just like a sister! And I'm not—quite."

"Julie, I am forty-six."

"My sister told me—before I came."

"She evidently wished to be a sobering influence—your sister."

"Relations stand for temperance."

"And little Marian loves me?" Vickary said thoughtfully. "She is just of the age, and mood, to love anyone, and I am here. That is all. How long do you suppose this penny passion for a fogey would last? I thought you were a clever woman. A simple soldier is more subtle."

"Clever! I don't know. I only want to tell the truth," said Julie pitifully. "Look at me—look!"

"Truth is so much more lovely than a lie. Is it fancy dress? With your hair smooth and tucked round the tips of your ears you look like my mother in the family album; wearing good black silk trimmed with little fringes. She was quite young when it was taken—not thirty. You'll never look more—to me. Time cannot set a depraving mark on you, sweet."

The intoxicating blood—that refused to grow cold, run old and slow—flew to her cheeks. She could feel with joy how bright her eyes were.

"You mean it—you are sure?"

"This sight of you has made me eternally sure. What a charming fool a woman is! Don't you know that you look a thousand times more delightful unpicked than finished? Women have a blind belief in all that humbug of hairdressing and fripperies. A man sees through it, wishes it all away. Even a savage soldier—sees."

With her swaying, incorrigible, captivating change of moods, Julie looked happy. The tragedy upstairs at the dressing-table which had been poignant became piquant only. But the agonizing memory of it would always remain. It had been so real while it lasted and she was a woman who lived with abandon every moment and every

mood of her life. She could be nothing by halves.

"How it hurt me to do it!" she said thoughtfully and looking down at the toe of her slipper. "How final and vital it was!" The dawn of a smile broke at her lips.

"I love you to have done it. Finished coquetry—and quite unconscious!"

"Conscious heartbreak—while it lasted. And hearts are brittle. Mine will likely break—with joy; if you really mean it."

"How can I convince you—how?" he said helplessly.

They kept silence, held apart. The glowing gilded shadow of their first caress—a distracting presence—stepped between them. Julie knew that—perhaps tomorrow—her lips at last would live.

"If I had looked really ugly?" she asked.

"Dear, you couldn't."

"But—if?"

"It would have made no manner of difference," he laughed, then checked himself, at the thought of the chastely sleeping house. "Don't you understand that you are the one woman, more perfect to me than a whole batch of young London beauties bunched together? Away with them! How can I make you sure?"

Julie was smiling, she was radiant—he was thinking that he could have lighted his pipe at her blazing eyes. That was his soldier's way—to take homely thoughts and mold them into shapes for worship.

"Poor little Marian!" she said. "I am sorry for her. Yet, I didn't do it

for Marian, I did it for truth. Love makes you so candid, so crystal clear, and after all, the young person is too insipid to provoke sacrifice."

"Marian! She will be amply consoled—on Saturday."

"Saturday?"

"Hasn't your sister told you? Did she stop short at saying I was forty-six? I have a nephew, twenty-three, in the Lancers. Your sister has asked him to stay for a week."

"How kind of my sister—and astute! Was she astute in our case or merely accidental? One never quite plumbs the intriguing capacity of these matronly, indolent women. And—and you are quite sure?"

She was looking at him, her lips moved. Was it laughter or was it tears trying hard not to come?

"Sure, Julie, sure—quite sure."

They could hear the waves run laughing along the beach and telling each other this charming jest, this tragedy turned upside down.

"My agony—of renunciation—was so real," said Julie. "A woman would understand—perfectly; a man—never."

"I suppose not, but—I can't talk. I can only look at you."

"Your sex has no grasp of abstract emotional grandeur."

"My sex is a simple thing, but—never mind. Don't be complex. You are only a delightful child yourself—and always will be."

"On the contrary, sometimes I am a very old woman—and have never been anything else," she said.

And as she said it she laughed—the little, sweet, crisp laugh that would never be shrill or cracked.



MAMA'S GIRL

VISITOR—How is it you are happy only half the time?
ETHEL—Papa has me every six months.

A CRITICAL PASSION

By W. J. Henderson

IT was one o'clock in the city-room of the *Morning Leader*. The night city editor was smoking a pipe in the interval between sending up the story of a political meeting and getting the telephone returns from the up-town police stations. The telegraph desk was shuffling off a few scattered pieces of Western "flimsy" and the fag ends of the cable. Washington and Albany had both sent "good night," and unless a three-alarm fire, a column murder or a fatal railway accident came in, the paper was likely to go peacefully to press in another hour without disturbing the quiet routine of the office.

Suffern, the emergency reporter of the night, was sitting on a desk swinging his feet and listening to the rapturous chatter of Billy Woodburn, the "cub," who had aspirations to be music critic and who was accordingly sent occasionally to do a two-stick concert about which no opinion was to be expressed. Billy had covered one of them that night and had swum into the office in a sea of emotion. He had seen and heard a golden-haired prima donna of some two months' experience sing Handel's "Sweet Bird" with the aid of a rapid-fire flute-player. Billy had been talking about the angel for more than an hour and had had listeners in relays.

Suffern had watched the coming and departing of the relays and speculated on Billy's chances of making a fool of himself by hunting up his new divinity and trying to work off a Sunday story about her beautiful home life. Meanwhile Packard, the music critic, who had paid the office one of his rare visits

by reason of having attended a special performance of opera in Brooklyn, had completed his style No. 2, patent finish, article on the "event" and had settled down for a good-night smoke and a chin with the boys, of whom he was most particularly fond. Billy's gabble had attracted his attention and he sat with his arms crossed over the back of a chair as he heard Billy's fourth da capo of his rhapsody in A-flat.

"Billy, my son," he said, "cut it out."

"What?" demanded Billy; "cut what out?"

"Falling in love with the prima donna, my son. It's no good."

"Why not?" exclaimed Billy. "Isn't a singer a woman, just like the others?"

"No," proclaimed Packard in his most oracular manner, "she's not. So far as one of us is concerned she's the vampire, the rag and a bone and a hank of hair; and she never can understand."

Packard's voice hardened as he spoke and his eyes softened and thereby Suffern, who was a man and a brother, and not a suckling, knew that there was a splinter of the past pricking at Packard's memory.

"Tell us all about it," he said; "perhaps it will do the infant good."

"I don't know why the devil I should tell you two boys about it," declared Packard, "and I suppose that's why I'm going to."

He sat up, pulled in a quick breath, took two or three short whiffs at his fading cigar and narrated thus.

Once upon a time Thomas Packard,

of whom you know more than is good for him and less than is good for you, was a young person loaded with enthusiasm and ideals. He believed in Art with a capital A and in ARTISTS with capital letters all the way through. It was a good thing for him to believe in Art, for it caused him to study things which he might otherwise have neglected. It taught him that Mozart and Beethoven and Schubert were, when all was said and done, rather larger people than Paderewski and Melba and Maud Powell. But it took him a lot of years to find that out, and in the beginning he was like the earth before the creation, without form and void.

He analyzed symphonies and oratorios at great length and with much labor, expending tons of thought on details for which his readers cared as much as flying-fish for bird-cages. He swung about him right valiantly and many a rising young pianist and violinist did he lay low with the jawbone of an ass. He had, like Rosalind, a swashing and martial air, and lots of people thought he knew things. He thought so even more than they did. More than in anything else he believed in himself. He had ambitions, had this young person, and he set out to enthrone truth on a hilltop. He was an honest fool. He said just what he thought, said all of it, too, keeping nothing back. And he tried to keep himself unspotted from the world.

He refused to know professional musicians. And because he refused to know them he was as ignorant of their real nature as a gray-and-green parrot is of logic. In later years his example was emulated by one William Woodburn, who will acquire wisdom and unbelief with the passage of lustrums. One day there came unto this cock-sparrow a crafty creature whose occupation it was to further the interests of certain singers in the nickel-plated opera company of upper Broadway. This person said to youthful and enthusiastic Thomas Packard:

"My boy, you ought to come out of your shell and make the acquaintance

of some of the leading people of the profession. You have lived your hermit life long enough. It has been a good thing for you, I admit. It has established your reputation for rigorous honesty and impartiality, and all that sort of thing. Meanwhile you have made your reputation as a critic and the big people in the profession wish to know you. It can't hurt you now, you know."

Much more of this sort of talk did this crafty creature pour into the unsophisticated ear of Thomas. He was impressed by it. He knew that musicians were satisfied of his honesty because not since his first season had anyone tried to bribe him. He felt that he stood upon solid ground and that if he should make the acquaintance of some of the leading singers of the opera, who certainly had no favors to ask of him, his action could not be misconstrued.

Nevertheless he declined the persuasive one's invitation to luncheon, and on the following day innocently accepted an invitation to dine with a music-loving woman whom he had recently met and whose conversation interested him.

If he had known more about her he would have known that she never ate without a professional at her table. Therefore he was just a trifle shaken up when he went to the dinner and found himself detailed to take in no less a person than Mlle. Saforia, whose real name was Safford, who came from Ohio and who had made something of a hit as Juliette—in Paris.

Packard knew all about Paris Grand Opéra successes, of course, but he did not know all about Elizabeth Safford. He learned some things while he sat beside her at dinner. The conversation ran along the usual rails for a time, and then Mlle. Saforia raised her violet eyes, humid and lucent, to Packard's and murmured in her low register, piano:

"I hope you are coming to my début in Juliette."

"I suppose I shall," answered Packard in a matter-of-fact tone.

"You suppose so? Can't you make it more positive?"

"It is positive. I have to be there. It's my business."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, staccato, "you don't mean—are you *the* Mr. Packard?"

"I'm him," responded the critic, not pretending to misunderstand her.

"I'm so sorry," she said, letting the violet eyes focus on the tablecloth.

"Sorry? Why, I've not written anything about you yet."

"I mean I am sorry that I have met you before you did so. You will think that I am trying to be nice to you so that you will be good to me."

This was meat and drink to young Packard. It was feeding him his own food. He always thought it a pity that a critic should meet an artist before writing anything about her. About the "hims" it mattered, also, but naturally less.

"Do you really wish to stand entirely on your merits?" he fatuously asked her.

"Most assuredly. Wouldn't you, if you were in my place?"

"Oh, I don't know. Most of your profession crave praise at any price. They think it fools the public. It doesn't."

"I don't wish to fool the public. I wish to conquer it. I wish to give the public the best that is in me and to have that best be satisfying. If my best is not good enough, I must try to make it better. Is not that true?"

"True? Of course it's true. But it is not what musicians generally believe. What they believe is that they must do the best they can and if their best is not good enough, the public must be bamboozled or bulldozed into thinking it is."

"I see," she said, turning on the *vox humana* stop again; "you are a hardened cynic. You have lived among routiniers. You have seen the bread-and-butter side of my profession. You do not believe in the sincere artist. You will not believe in me——"

She raised those great violet eyes once more and sent a look into the corner of Packard's soul. He returned the

gaze with interest and for several seconds they sat silently ferreting in the glooms of each other's psychology till a laugh at some market-garden jest at the opposite side of the table tore their spirits apart and reminded them that tragedies of the heart were not published over napkins.

I suppose you fellows have all heard of love at first sight. Well, it was that for Packard. He was plunged fathoms deep in it. And so was she.

Don't get a false impression from this narrative. She loved him, in her prima-donna way, passionately, immediately and ultimately. Of course neither of them admitted the awful truth just then. Even in the unholy circles of musical bohemia these things are carried forward with some regard for artistic form. The theme, the development and the climax are employed just as they would be in the construction of a sonata. But while there is form, there is little enough of formality and the movement is presto agitato from the start. After the laugh had interrupted the soul explorations, Packard remarked in a suppressed tone:

"It is for you to make me believe in you—if you think it worth while."

"If you will believe in me in your heart, I shall not care whether you praise me or condemn me in your paper. It is your faith I want."

That speech brought Packard temporarily back to earth.

"My dear Mile. Saforia," he said, "you would regard me as your enemy if I found your Juliette deficient."

For all answer she gave him a wondrous look, and he was satisfied.

He called on her the next afternoon at five. She was at home. There had been no engagement, but she was waiting for him.

"I dreamed that you would come," she murmured on her low E, letting her slim fingers caress his for the fraction of a second.

"I knew it from the instant I looked into your eyes last night," said Packard. You see, he was past the theme and well into the development.

They did not talk much. Their

conversation was composed chiefly of orchestral silence and looks with occasional flashes of recitative. Presently she rose and went to her piano.

"I am going to sing to you," she said; "not opera, but something different."

She sang "Liebestreu" and "Feld einsamkeit" and "Wie bist du meine Königin?" That settled it. If Packard had a weak spot, it was for the songs of Brahms. And this Ohio girl could sing them. How she had ever learned to do so is still one of the mysteries of Packard's experience, for certainly her Paris Grand Opéra training and her Milan sensations had never unsealed to her these sacred fonts; and she did not sing Wagner. Anyhow, when she came to "Lass mich vergehn in deinem Arm," Packard was so moved that he almost shed tears. She let her hands drop from the keyboard and gazed at him a moment. Then she glided to his side and laying a hand on his shoulder said, with a real tremor in her voice:

"Do you believe in me now?"

He reached up and took the hand and pressed it passionately to his lips.

"Yes," he said; "I love you."

The next instant she was in his arms and her lips were on his. You see the development is worked out now to the climax. Next comes the coda.

"What shall I do?" asked Packard presently. "Shall I resign?"

"Resign what?" she asked in a dazed manner.

"My position as music critic."

"Why should you do that?"

"How can I write honestly about you when I love you?"

She sprang back from his embrace and stood majestic before him.

"Do you suppose I could love you if you were not honest?"

There was no question about it. In her prima-donna way she truly loved this man. When Packard departed at six-thirty they had concentrated about three months of love-making into an hour and a half. The form was perfect, but the tempo was reckless. Packard went home to try to think

things over. He had to do a Boston Symphony concert that night, and Gericke never seemed so smooth, so polite, so civilized as he did in his reading of the "Eroica." Packard was positively nasty the next morning, and he was an admirer of Gericke, too. But he was certain that there were depths in Beethoven, and so on and so on.

Well, to get into the coda, Mlle. Saforia did not make her debut in Juliette, after all. She made it as Marguerite. She told Packard beforehand that her Juliette was better, but after all Gounod had given her the sacred kiss for her Marguerite. He at least believed in her.

Packard sat through the performance in a sort of trance. He found his passionate damsel transformed into a Boulevard prima donna. Her Marguerite was perfect in every outward detail. It was the most exquisite essence of Grand Opéra conventionality. Icily perfect, splendidly null; isn't that the formula? Yes, that was what it was.

Now, Packard knew she was not that sort of woman. That gave him his cue for the criticism. He praised her Marguerite in phrases as polished and pretty as her own performance. But he proclaimed that there was more in her than this interpretation had disclosed. The part was not wholly congenial to her. It failed to touch her heart. She was never aroused in it. She was a correct and beautiful representative of Gounod's musical idea, but she was not an illusive Marguerite. It was all true. Packard was not refining the word to suit the subject. He was rigorously honest. He never tempered the wind to the shorn lamb, and he sternly refused to do it for the woman he loved. Had she not told him that she could not love him if he were not true to himself?

He went to her the next afternoon, on his way home from a piano recital at Mendelssohn Hall. She melted into his arms and caressed his hair as she gazed up into his anxious eyes.

"My Lord and Master," she murmured, "how I love you!"

"I have not hurt you?" he said.

"No, no," she answered. "How could you hurt me by your brave honesty? And Marguerite isn't my best part, anyhow. I'm sure you'll like me much better as Juliette and Mimi and Tosca."

Something in this speech sent a momentary chill over Packard's veins, but he quickly rallied. Probably he would like her better. He would wait.

"You wrote exactly what your mind told you, did you not?" she asked; "you did not let your heart misguide you?"

"That is it, dear. You have said it."

She mused a minute as she rested her head on his shoulder. Then she lifted her lips for a kiss, and as he kissed her, she whispered:

"You are the first who ever thought my Marguerite cold. How can it be?"

"That is one of the impenetrable mysteries of art," he said with an air of finality.

"Like some of your criticisms, eh?"

"Oh, Lord!" he exclaimed, "if you're going to talk about them, I suspect we shall soon be buried in impenetrable mysteries."

She laughed and cooed at him and he was most foolishly happy. You see, this coda is like that of the first movement of Beethoven's "Eroica," much longer than the working out would lead you to expect and containing some new matter. Packard went home more in love than ever. He did not see her the next day because he was overrun with concerts. The day after that she was resting in preparation for her Juliette, and he refrained from calling.

Then came the great night, the night of what she regarded as her real début. Packard was a good bit more nervous than she was. In fact, he was quite shaky, while she was perfectly calm. For the life of him he could not have told what made him feel that way.

Well, she sang the waltz song faultlessly. You know how much store the public sets by that tawdry achievement and how little the critic cares for it, for the good reason that it lies en-

tirely outside the rôle. Her first act was admirable. She was the Lady Juliette in very truth. But with the second began the descent into elegance. Packard was troubled. He was also steeped in wonder. Was this the woman who had sung "Wie bist du meine Königin?" And then he had a flash of inspiration. In the morning his paper had something of this sort:

"Beautiful, proud, stately, the daughter of a hundred earls, as it were, this Juliette moved to her fate with the poise of a grande dame of the Revolution. Not a flaw was there in the delivery of the unctuous music of Gounod. The river of melody flowed, undulate and glinting, ever onward. The ear was ravished by such singing. Yet in the end the taste and not the emotions was satisfied. What was the secret of it? The woman is not cold. She has a temperament of flame. But there is something in the requirements of the stage that cabins and confines her genius. She is not for the sock or buskin. Her true field is the *Lied*. In Schubert she would reach every heart; in Brahms she would move the world."

There was a good deal more of it. That is a condensed version. You see, in those days Packard was a phrase-maker. He believed in fine writing. He knew this tribute to her *Lieder* singing would move her deeply. This was their own particular sweet field of intimacy. When she sang Schubert and Schumann and Brahms to him he was in artistic paradise. And it was a fact that she was the greatest singer of these composers that Packard had ever heard. He has not heard a better one since that time. Well, now for the final chords. Packard went to see her the next afternoon. She received him, standing in a statuesque pose.

"So," she said, "you don't think I'm fit for an opera singer."

"My dear love—" he began, but she cut him short.

"Don't 'dear love' me! I'm afraid, my good friend, that you are too impressed with the importance of your opinions. How dare you say that I ought to devote myself to *Lieder* singing? The idea! A prima donna famous on two continents coming down to Mendelssohn Hall and piano accompaniment!"

"But, my dear girl, think of your

Art. You are the greatest *Lieder* singer in the world."

"Greatest fiddlesticks! I'm the greatest Juliette in the world. The master himself said it. Did he not kiss me here, on the forehead? I carry that kiss always upon my brow as the sign manual of his perfect approval. I am a prima donna, sir, now and for life."

Packard stared at her in helpless silence. Even Gounod's kisses were mixed.

"I think you and I have made a mistake, Mr. Packard," she continued.

"I thought you were satisfied to have me write according to my convictions about you."

"Well, you did it once, didn't you? Did you expect to go on damning me

all your life and have me love you for it?"

Packard picked up his hat.

"You are right," he said; "it was a mistake. I think we had better cling to our respective callings. You sing opera and I'll write comment. But just the same you are the greatest *Lieder* singer on earth."

"Beast!" she hissed, as he passed out of the door.

Billy Woodburn looked thoughtful. Suffern heaved a sympathetic sigh. Packard struck a match and relighted his cigar.

"Good night, boys," he said. "Cut it out, Billy; it's no good. The singer woman has only one use for you; that use is not good for you. Cut it out."



A TALE OF WRONG

By Caroline Mischka Roberts

IN writing "wrong" reformers show
That "w" is quite *de trop*;
They say 'tis but a senseless bore
To force on pen and eye a chore
Which tongue and ear shirked long ago.

That "rong" is right in speech we know,
But when 'tis spelled on paper so,
Somehow it looks in printing or
In writing wrong.

And if we write it thus, and throw
Tradition to the four winds, lo!
Conservatives, aghast before
Such vandalism, wrath outpour
Until we learn one must go slow
In righting wrong.

THE MAXIMS OF METHUSELAH

BEING THE ADVICE GIVEN BY THE PATRIARCH IN HIS NINE HUNDRED,
SIXTY AND NINTH YEAR, TO HIS GREAT-GRANDSON SHEM, IN REGARD TO WOMEN

By Gelett Burgess

MY SON, wouldst thou flatter women? I counsel thee, *avoid generalities*, say not unto her, Thou art fair, my love, thou rejoicest my heart with thy comeliness,

2 But let thy words be definite; go thou into *details*, and it will cause her much joy.

3 Say unto her, Lo, thy nostrils are proud, they show thy caste; and thine ear is like unto a seashell, it is far too little. How cunning are the tips of thy fingers, and the line of thine eyebrows, naught can excel.

4 ¶ For she *knoweth* her points; good and bad knoweth she them all, from the greatest unto the smallest. *Thou canst not teach her.*

5 Her mirror instructeth her, lo, she knoweth her frame. Ask her and she shall tell thee, that thou mayest contradict.

6 She knoweth the excellencies of her rivals, and if she hath a thick wrist of every *other* woman's wrist shall she be acquainted.

7 She weareth a number *three* shoe, for it is a comfort unto her feet; but if thou askest her will she say: Lo, a *two and-a-half*, it is my size.

8 Knowest thou a woman who criticizeth not her sisters' attire? I say unto thee, there is not *one* of them ignorant, nay, not one who shall not point out their faults, and counsel them what they should wear.

9 Though she dresseth like an art-student, yet is she a competent authority.

10 ¶ She whom thou lovest must laugh when thou laughest, and weep when thou weepest; but if she weep when thou laughest and laugh when thou weepest, woe be unto thee!

11 ¶ Like the alarm clock that goeth off at 7 A.M., so is she who sayeth: *I told you so!*

12 But a woman who dallieth and is tardy, she is like an upper stair that is not there; she shall cause thee to curse.

13 ¶ Now I called upon a matron; at her house I paid my visit, and I found a bore therewith.

14 And he tarried,

15 And he tarried,

16 And he tarried.

17 While his back was turned, while he discoursed of the weather and the theatre and of Bernard Shaw, while he puffed himself up and vaunted his wisdom, lo, she yawned in her handkerchief; yea, she winked at me, wishing that he might depart; for we desired much to be *alone* together.

18 And it came to pass that after many hours he arose to depart; he took his hat and stood, talking.

19 Then began that matron to gush mightily with gossip; her eye lighted, with many words beguiled she him, telling him divers tales.

20 So that he stood first upon one foot and then upon the other, *knowing not how* to make his farewell.

21 And she talked for an hour, seeking to conceal her shame.

22 And I wondered mightily, it was

too much for me; nay, I could not understand it.

23 ¶ Many a woman seemeth to be trying to convince thee, but it is herself whom she would convince.

24 ¶ What is quicker than a woman's mind? She leapeth to conclusions, and the question thou askest, she answereth it not; but what she *thinketh* thou *meanest*, that she answereth. She will not be pinned down.

25 As a fly entangled upon sticky fly-paper, so is a woman who seeketh to justify her indiscretion.

26 Lo, if thou speakest to her the truth, she will not believe it; she sayeth Ha, ha, he hath told me only the half; I will add unto it.

27 Son, say not unto the strange damsels, Lo, thy *sidecomb falleth*, or thy hairpin falleth from thee; it inviteth her wrath, she will spit upon thee in fury.

28 As litmus changeth from red to blue, so a woman turneth a compliment into an insult, and as a concave mirror distorteth, so will she misconstrue thy words.

29 ¶ Now there were four women and to each of them I lent fifty shekels;

30 And the first damsels said unto herself: Lo, I will not repay him, for he is richer than I; he can afford it. And she paid me not.

31 And the second damsels said unto herself: Lo, said he not that he was in no haste? Some time will I repay him, but not now. And she spake not of her debt, neither did she repay me.

32 And the third damsels suffered much, for she was in hard luck, and she came unto me, saying: Behold, much would I like to repay thee, but I have not the wherewithal, yet have I not forgotten thy kindness to me, and thy name I praise continually: I will pay thee next month. Yet did she never pay.

33 And the fourth damsels paid me in full measure; on the next Saturday discharged she her debt.

34 ¶ Of women who could brook reproof have I known upwards of four hundred; but of them who could

graciously receive a compliment, nay, not one.

35 Can a woman entertain a man and a pet at the same time? I say unto thee, one of the twain will be made jealous.

36 As the saltcellar whose cover cometh off in the soup, so is the matron who extolleth overmuch her babes.

37 Even as the sound of sleigh-runners upon bare ground, so is she who sayeth: *I shall never marry*.

38 ¶ Attend unto mine instruction, and propose not to the wrong maid, for I give thee revealing signs.

39 Ask her not who tryeth to get in ahead of the line at the ticket window; and to her who shutteth not the car-door after her, make thou no offer.

40 Nor whoso spendeth her hours in the dressing-room of the Pullman, causing her sisters to gnash their teeth and say *fierce things*,

41 Neither to her who sayeth not soon: *Good-bye*, at the telephone nor her who grafteth thy scarfpin, saying: *I will return it*, I say unto thee, marry her not.

42 ¶ Behold, there was a married woman and she had a friend; and her husband loved him.

43 And on a day the young man wrote to her, saying: *Come thou to lunch with me* on Saturday; at the restaurant will I meet thee.

44 So she met him, and they ate together, discoursing virtuously and without evil.

45 But on that night said she unto her husband: Lord, today, as I walked in the city, I happened to meet Charlie, and he invited me to eat, and I went with him.

46 And her husband said, *All right*, and he opened his paper to read.

47 Count not on women's honesty, for she telleth the truth by halves: believe her not when she justifieth herself; her words are vain.

48 ¶ She who hath little to say, writeth four words to the page; but a woman with intelligence, her script is small, and she dateth her letters.

49 Rather a plain woman with a

sense of humor than a peach who is a bromide; and a damsel who reciteth poetry aloud in company is like unto a mouse in a bed, causing me to squirm.

50 Behold, the thoroughbred is wonderful to me; but the cheap woman is an abomination.

51 She weareth a solitaire moon-stone ring, and she cleaneth it *not*.

52 She weareth *Louise Quinze* slippers and they are run over at the heel; there is a hole in her stocking.

53 She weareth an *old silk waist* at her housework; and the crisp morning frock knoweth she not.

54 Her white gloves are black alway, and the button disappeareth from her boots.

55 Her Jaegers bulge at her shoetops, her placket stayeth not shut; nay, it gapeth open, causing men to turn away their heads.

56 ¶ Two maids and a man may have pleasure together; but a maid and two men provoke discord.



ZAUBER-DUFT

(FRAGRANCE-MAGIC)

By Martha G. Dickinson Bianchi

WHAT heart but fears a fragrance?
Alien they
Who breathe in the white lilac only May;
For there be other spirits unto whom
Fate's kiss lies dreaming in each stray perfume!

Who mock at ghosts of odor—poor they be!
Bereft the scented balms of memory,
For unto one in April's rain-blest earth
There starts for aye the sharp, glad cry of birth;
And Love will find in rooms unbarred for years
Familiar sweetness loosing sudden tears,
Clasping the will in mastering embrace
As in the presence of a phantom grace.

Then there be odors pungent—fires in Fall
The gipsying of boyhood to recall;
And there be perfumes holy—nay, but one
Whose pang is like none other 'neath the sun
To drown the sinking senses in a joy
Beyond all time to weaken or destroy!
Odors there be that swoon, entreat, caress—
Elusive thrall, to doom or stab or bless;
Each vagrant scent that holds the breath in fee
Doth wed the heart in Life's eternity.

Who fear no wraiths of fragrance—sorry they!
Who breathe in lilac odors only May;
For there be other mortals unto whom
White magic wanders in each stray perfume!

LA PETITE POINTE

Par Pierre Villetard

A PRÈS trente ans de boutique, M. et Mme Chênois firent bâtir une maisonnette au bord de la mer. Toute leur vie ils avaient caressé ce projet. Il venait de loin, de ce jour merveilleux de fin juillet où, cédant tout à coup au besoin d'air pur qui emplissait leurs coeurs de vingt ans, ils étaient partis, brusquement, comme des fous, un samedi soir, et avaient débarqué, passé minuit, dans une vieille petite gare normande où, tout de suite, la brise marine avait rafraîchi leurs visages et salé leurs lèvres. Ah! cette première nuit d'amour tremblante, merveilleuse, dans une chambre d'hôtel inconnue où leur lit était secoué comme un navire au milieu des flots. Délicieusement lassés, ils s'étaient levés de bonne heure, pourtant; ils avaient longtemps marché sur la falaise, au milieu des chardons bleus et des touffes d'ajoncs. Ils découvrirent enfin un cap verdoyant où les sauterelles, de leur murmure sec et léger accompagnaient le grave bourdonnement de la mer. Ils s'assirent dans un trou de gazon, au bras l'un de l'autre; ils étaient heureux. Au-dessus de leurs têtes, le ciel vibrait comme un dôme de soie. Devant eux, la mer s'étalait, semée de moires, par le caprice de longs nuages silencieux et incandescents...

Rentrés à Paris, ils parlèrent encore de la petite pointe. Elle était le meilleur de leurs souvenirs. Plus tard, quand ils se marièrent et qu'ils achetèrent un fonds d'épicerie, ils ne cessèrent pas d'y songer. Parfois, au milieu du jour, ils se poussaient du coude:

— La petite pointe, hein?

— Ah! oui! la petite pointe...

Leurs affaires prospéraient. Le rêve,

bientôt, se précisa. Ils décidèrent qu'au jour de la retraite, ils achèteraient un bout de terrain et feraient bâtir sur la petite pointe une maison de campagne.

Ce furent vingt ans de travail et d'économies. La petite pointe avait une caisse à laquelle il ne fallait point qu'on touchât. De loin en loin, les Chênois faisaient un voyage pour surveiller leur propriété future. Ils y menèrent leur fille Jeanne, l'assirent dans le trou de gazon au milieu des mousserons et des pâquerettes roses:

— Hein, petite, on est bien, disait M. Chênois.

Il avait ôté sa veste, il cueillait des fleurs et les jetait sur les genoux de l'enfant.

— Plus tard, ma belle, tu pourras te promener dans ton jardin.

Jeanne grandit, puis se maria. Elle eut, à son tour, une fillette, une gamine aux cheveux de soleil que papa Chênois faisait sauter sur ses genoux en chantant de vieux airs. Et la maison fut bâtie, enfin. Elle occupait le sommet de la petite pointe.

Un jour, au commencement du mois d'août, ils y arrivèrent tous les cinq, amenés par la voiture du chemin de fer, une diligence poudreuse, surannée et qui avait bien du mal à grimper les côtes. Durant le temps de la construction, c'était M. Chênois qui avait surveillé les travaux. Seule, l'opinion de son gendre lui tenait au cœur. C'est que le gendre était un employé de l'Etat, un garçon correct, distingué, que sa bonté d'âme empêchait de trop dédaigner la famille de commerçants dans laquelle il était entré. Pour chaque détail, M. Chênois lui demandait:

— Eh bien! Victor, que pensez-vous de cela?

Et Victor approuvait gravement, posément, en hochant sa belle barbe brune, ce qui remplissait le cœur de M. Chênois d'une joie indicible. L'excellent homme! Il avait bien dix ans de moins ce jour-là. Il embrassait alternativement sa femme et sa fille. Il prenait les mains de son gendre et les gardait longtemps dans les siennes comme s'il eût voulu prononcer des mots qui ne parvenaient pas à sortir.

Dans la maison, d'ailleurs, tout avait été joie et surprise: les chaises de campagne fleurant la toile neuve, les murs vêtus de papiers à fleurs, le piano droit où Jeanne, de ses doigts minces, voulut tout de suite tapoter une valse. Immédiatement le gendre alla chercher son appareil à photographie. Il prit la maison de face, de profil, à toutes les distances. On ne se lassait pas de contempler la silhouette fragile. Le soir, on fit sauter le champagne, et M. Chênois leva son verre en l'honneur de la villa. Jamais, durant sa longue carrière, il n'avait prononcé de discours. Cette fois, il était propriétaire, il se sentait beaucoup plus d'audace. La famille ne lui ménagea pas les applaudissements et son gendre vint lui serrer la main—ce qui flatta son amour-propre et l'emplit d'une orgueilleuse joie.

Le lendemain, comme le temps était beau, la jeune femme proposa de faire une promenade. Ils descendirent à la grève par un sentier et se trouvèrent bientôt au bord de la mer. Elle était haute. Une barque se balançait au pied de la falaise. Près d'elle, un jeune pêcheur, la pipe aux dents, raccommodait un filet. Jeanne, immédiatement, eut un désir:

— Oh! père, une promenade en mer. C'est ça qui serait amusant.

— Je n'y tiens pas, déclara M. Chênois.

Mais il eut tout le monde contre lui. Le gendre disait:

— Ah! ah! papa, vous avez la drousse.

Mme Chênois intervint.

— Eh bien! mon ami, tu nous atten-

dras, voilà tout. De la petite pointe, d'ailleurs, tu pourras nous suivre.

Déjà le pêcheur avait détaché sa barque. M. Chênois craignit d'être ridicule et ne dit plus rien. Les voyageurs partis, il remonta lentement le sentier de la falaise. Il atteignit le sommet de la petite pointe. En effet, on voyait la barque, elle s'éloignait peu à peu vers la haute mer. Une fois le cap doublé, M. Chênois cessa de l'apercevoir. Alors il s'assit sur le gazon et bourra sa pipe. La promenade ne durerait pas plus de deux heures, du moins, c'était le délai que sa ménagère avait fixé. Or, qu'est-ce que cela, deux heures? Au dedans M. Chênois sourit de ses craintes. Vraiment il n'y avait aucun danger. Il faisait très beau. La mer plane et huileuse, sous le soleil d'août, rayonnait doucement. En bas, sur la grève blonde, les vagues courtes déferlaient avec un murmure, ouriant d'un fil d'argent la ceinture noire des roches à fleur d'eau. Autour de M. Chênois, les sauterelles, comme il y a trente ans, fileraient leur douce et sempiternelle musique. Une heure trois quarts. M. Chênois épiait l'horizon. La barque allait reparaître. Il savait le point où il la verrait, et ses yeux ne le quittaient plus... Deux heures, deux heures un quart.

— Tiens, ils ont du retard, pensa M. Chênois.

Cependant, il n'était pas encore inquiet. Il le fut un quart d'heure plus tard. Le soleil avait légèrement baissé.

— C'est singulier, murmura-t-il.

Et il se leva. Les yeux rivés à l'horizon, fiévreusement, il attendait. Pourquoi donc ne revenaient-ils pas? Le soir descendit peu à peu, le soleil disparut, un vent plus frais plissa la mer d'où la lune surgit tout à coup comme une grosse orange. M. Chênois avait pris sa tête à deux mains:

— Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!

Les heures défilèrent l'une après l'autre. M. Chênois attendait toujours. Une fois vers minuit, il crut qu'il rêvait. Il poussa la grille de son jardin, pénétra dans sa maison neuve. Mais le silence, la solitude lui firent horreur. Vite il redescendit sur le cap et reprit son poste.

La mer, petit à petit, s'était retirée, découvrant des bancs de sable fauve entre lesquels étincelaient des mares d'argent. Le vent de la nuit sifflait aux oreilles de M. Chênois. Le vieil homme pleurait, balbutiait: "Jeanne-Marie," explorant toujours du regard l'extrémité de la petite pointe où la mer revint féline, murmurante, entourant les rochers de broderies d'écume.

Et le jour monta. Une ligne blanche s'élargit au-dessus du village et des peupliers. M. Chênois avait cessé d'espérer. A bout de forces, il s'était laissé tomber à terre, geignant, effondré, ne pensant plus...

Soudain, il tressaillit. Là-bas, vers la haute mer, un point noir était visible. Ce point grandit peu à peu, devint une barque, une barque de pêche où s'agitaient des êtres vivants. Tout à coup, pareils à des flocons de neige, des mouchoirs flottèrent dans l'air pur et frais du matin. M. Chênois eut un rire nerveux. Il ne comprenait pas, il perdait le sens exact des réalités.

Mais la barque s'approcha peu à peu.

Elle atteignit enfin la grève. Aussitôt des cris s'élevèrent. Cinq personnes gravissaient en courant le sentier qui mène au sommet du cap. M. Chênois, droit, terrible, attendait. On se précipitait vers lui:

— Ah! papa, comme nous avons pensé à toi!

On le couvrait de baisers, on voulait lui conter l'aventure: la barque échouée dans une anse au moment du reflux, l'impossibilité de revenir à pied sec à cause des varechs glissants et des trous dangereux; il avait fallu attendre une nouvelle marée.

Lui, se débarrassant de toutes les étretines:

— Non, non... laissez-moi... ce n'est pas vrai... je sais que vous êtes morts... morts.

Et tandis qu'autour de M. Chênois, devenu fou, la famille se pressait, halestante, épouree, là-haut, sur la petite pointe, découpant ses tourelles et ses clochetons, la maison du bonheur souriaît vainement dans sa frêle ceinture de peupliers et de tamaris.



LOVING YOU

By John Vance Cheney

PERDITA, Juliet, Portia, Beatrice,
Ophelia, Desdemona—they lived when?
When Rosalind, Miranda, white Lucrece,
And—damask rose of women—Imogen?
No hue can ever fade from beauty's morn;
These and rare Rachel, Leah, tender-eyed,
Rebecca, from the well, Ruth, from the corn—
Blush yet, all dewy, dearest, at your side.
But for your Summer, many a beauty-name
Had been mere wandering music in my ears;
To your June loves of all old lovers came,
Their lovely bodies flowering from the years.
Lordliest of lordly lovers, loving you,
These old loves, dear, I love and worship, too.

THE OUTSIDER

By Catherine Carr

THE children's teeth are set on edge by the fruit which the parents have eaten, and now and again by that which they have not.

It was so with Randolph Brant. Had his mother ever known what she termed "really swell society," she might not have been so anxious that her son should enjoy it.

'Being ignorant, however, of the inner workings of this much exploited body, she painted to him in glowing colors the mirage which she, because of invalidism, had ceased to hope to attain for herself, and which had taken much of the savor out of what should have been the best of her life.

It was a desire which her husband not only failed to share, but which he combated successfully—success being, indeed, quite usual with him. Through his dealings, first with cattle and then in oil, he amassed a large fortune, and though lavishly generous in all other regards, he set his face firmly against his son's becoming what he described as "a New York Willy-boy." Chasing steers he averred to be preferable to the pursuit of "show-girls," and he sustained his theory by quotations from the Sunday supplements. Also, "Texas for Texans," was his slogan, and Randolph was not sent East to college.

Randolph himself, while possessing youth's ready receptiveness of good times, was not over-troubled by his father's ruling. He admitted that the Eastern society game was a wonderful one, but then things came his way sufficiently in Texas to keep him from discontent. He made the football team at the 'Varsity and was very popular

in the Austin set, and when at twenty-three his father's sudden death placed him in unconditional control of vast wealth, he pursued the way of his father's preferences for the space of two years.

He might have so continued to the length of his days had not Harrington, of the Textile Trust and any number of others, stopped at Brant, the station built on Randolph's ranch, on the tour of oil-field inspection he was making in his private car.

Young Brant was deemed worthy of consideration by even an Eastern magnate. He got it from the women of the party on counts other than his possessions, since he was a handsome, well-set-up young man whose manner was a pleasing blend of boldness and deference, though Mrs. Rupert Verick, after a comprehensive gathering of these attractions, let her eyes wander, with even keener comprehension, to the gushers which stood for so many, many dollars a day. Then they sought her husband's eyes and in the back of the brain of each, the name Diana was formed.

Diana was Verick's sister, a capricious beauty who had lately refused to marry a millionaire because, she said, he was shorter than she and had defects of the nether limbs which it would have been more delicate, perhaps, to have ignored—when the million was considered. This gilded young Apollo, now—might he not commend himself to her? It was a question of vital import to the impoverished pair of descendants of patroons and Revolutionary generals.

They were very vivid in their telling

of New York social gaieties, and most cordial in their assurance of readiness to make his stay a pleasant one if he should decide to come on for the Winter.

For the first time young Brant was hesitant about the matter.

"I suppose—after all, I might as well go," he told his mother after seeing his guests off. "It would be a change, and the same old things get tiresome after a while. There's never anything new at Austin or San Antonio. Everything's old by the time it gets down here—Benton can run the oil business all right, and old Markham actually resents my saying anything about the cattle."

"Go!" she echoed. "Of course you'll go. What a chance! If I could have only had it!" she sighed, swaying impotently in her wheeled chair. "Oh, well, that's the way it always is for a woman. But *you* won't be an outsider—I'll have that consolation."

"Oh, it isn't that so much, as—well, it isn't exactly pleasant, of course, for an American to feel that he can't get in anywhere if he should happen to want to," Brant acknowledged. "And I don't reckon they'll hurt me any. It's the same there as in all places. The wrong things are there; it's up to a fellow to choose. Dad didn't—just understand. He believed all that rot in the papers," he added in apology for his father's strenuously voiced objections.

"Oh, that was just his *notion*. He was like that. Take a notion and he'd stick to it if the stars fell."

"Good thing he did when he was dealing with the Associated bunch," Brant said, moved to loyal impulse of defense. "If he hadn't held out against them I shouldn't be able to do any 'breaking into society.'"

"Oh, yes, it was well enough that way, but at home—well, I won't say anything," Mrs. Brant remarked with an accent of martyrdom.

II

RANDOLPH BRANT reached New York during Horse Show week. The

pageant of equine and feminine beauty was not new to him, for his Southern love of horses had caused him often to time his flying New York visits to the event; but the place from which he viewed the spectacle was wholly novel to him. This was Harrington's box.

Here he met Harrington's niece and her fiancé, an English lord, two or three bearers of historic names and some others of potent financial spelling, and received most flattering welcome from the Rupert Vericks. Likewise he heard much gossip of well-known names and was duly impressed. Yet, despite the newness of his position on the inside, he bore himself with the quiet ease that is the result of the habit of looking things in the face, and this and those Apollo-like looks of his won indulgence for whatever small ignorances might betray themselves.

From Harrington's box, too, he saw Diana Verick for the first time. The attendant circumstances were opportune.

Diana was riding Mrs. van Tassel Livingstone's black mare, Arlie, in the hunters' class, and Diana never looked better than when clad in the severity of her gray habit. She was of arrow-straightness and of a most admirable slim roundness. Her hair mocked the pretensions of henna, and her coloring, rich, glowing, showed a little marked in contrast to the gray calmness of her eyes and a certain firm setting of her mouth-corners. The lips themselves were deliciously curved.

A very goddess, in truth. Brant's first definiteness, with knowledge of her identity, was about the superb fitness of her name. The young Texan's ignorances were not of this sort. He had spent long hours with the classics and had got the beat of their noble rhythm of war and love, strongly if vaguely, in his veins. And then by the time the judges had awarded first place to the black mare, definiteness of the rhythm's import had come to Randolph Brant; likewise a sudden knowledge that lighted a spark in the blue of his eyes which rested openly and

persistently upon Diana so long as she was in the ring.

Louise Verick saw it, though her watchfulness was not apparent—and she threw a look of satisfaction across at her husband. Later Diana came to the box escorted by a couple of enthusiastic young cousins, and when Brant was introduced to her the same methods availed her sister-in-law to perceive the unconscious interest in the glance with which she swept the "gilded Apollo."

Diana's interest, however, as Louise well knew, was an uncertain quantity; and the time had come when trifles were not to be permitted to stand in the way. Diana, she decided, must be told.

With this end in view, she obtruded upon Diana's hour of undressing and hair-brushing, which was a late one. The Vericks had gone on to a supper and a dance after the Show, and Diana's acquaintance with Brant had been limited to the formalities of introduction and his congratulations upon her mount's success and upon her riding, which gave him no distinction, since both had been repeated to her many times. That his accent was of the South told her nothing of his eminent fitness to be a judge of riding, and that he was handsome was a mere detail.

The maid dismissed, Louise looked at the perverse daughter of patroons and generals with an expression of uncommon sweetness showing between her long, blond braids.

"You rode splendidly tonight, dear," she said. "But then you always do. What a shame you can't have a horse like Arlie for your own——"

"Thanks," Diana said, a little drily. "Did you insist on sending away Elise and my making a mess of my hair to tell me that?"

"Oh, no—of course not," seating herself in a Sleepy Hollow nest of cushions. "What do you think of him?"

"Who?"

"Mr. Brant, the young man from Texas. You know, I told you about him when we came back. And oh, Di,

you should see how he lives! Regular feudal style—miles of land with—innumerable oil-wells just flowing dollars."

"Your manner toward him made that foregone."

"Diana! Well, it can't be helped. Things are on the edge. Something's got to be done."

"Somebody, you mean."

"Diana, you are too horribly coarse!"

"I'm honest."

"Well even if you are there's no use in getting down to the bones of a thing—and rattling them. Anyway, marrying him wouldn't be what you delicately term 'doing him.'"

"You think not?"

"No—you're honest," Louise said with almost grudging admiration.

"Thanks, again. How about my temper?"

Finesse was evidently necessary here.

"Oh, you would not need to see overmuch of each other, you know. It's easily managed if one only has money enough. And it's just as I tell you. We can't keep on this way—and the crash will take you down, too. I can't see for the life of me what fault you can find with him. He's tall enough, goodness knows, and a perfect god for looks. In riding-clothes—he was dressed for riding that day we were at the ranch—he fairly took my breath. And his horses—wait till you see them! He's brought on a couple of hunters with him, he told me. They're worth showing, and you know how fond you are of riding, Diana. What do you want, anyway?" she ended petulantly.

Diana looked dreamily through the veil of red gold which she was brushing across her face.

"It is possible—even probable," she said slowly, "that I want—a man——"

"What do you mean?"

"It should be a very simple and elemental proposition—but there seem to be—complexities. As nearly as I can sift it, it means being—himself."

"Himself! Will you kindly tell me how in the few sentences you exchanged with Mr. Brant, you discovered that

he was not himself?—whatever that may mean."

"I didn't discover it; his presence here tells it. Why, when he has all the world's got to give to choose from, should he care to come to our narrow little round of gossip and—folly?"

"Because he wants to, I dare say. It's a free country—one can do as he likes—"

"Oh, can one?" Diana interjected with significance.

"If one has money, yes," Louise said with the air of the last word. "And you seem to enjoy that 'narrow little round' pretty well yourself," she indicated caustically.

"Oh—one's in it—and there seems no way out—for a woman. It—it's different when one isn't born in it and is a man. It isn't a man's game."

"It would be a very poor sort of game if there were no men in it," Louise said with sudden candor.

"Any game would be that," Diana acknowledged, equally sincere; "and as it isn't big enough for the men we—we could like best, we have to make believe we're content with substitutes."

"One way or another, life's all like that," Louise philosophized, "and no doubt you could make him give it up and help you in the pursuit of those lofty ideals of yours after you were married."

"Perhaps—but I don't think I want a husband whom I could 'make' do things."

"You would much better have that kind than one who would make you. You should have been born in the Stone Age."

Diana stretched out her long white arms and contemplated them reflectively.

"Sometimes I almost wish I had been," she said.

III

THERE was nothing about Diana Verick to suggest the primal inclinations she had expressed to her sister-in-law the second time she and Randolph Brant met.

The occasion was a dinner at the Harringtons', and her appearance was distinctly, even strikingly, of the finished product; perfectly turned out to the pink and polished finger-tips. She was dressed in white with touches of green that did glorious things to her hair and skin, and her manner toward him was of particular graciousness.

It was a conventional sort of graciousness, to be sure, but Brant had not yet acquired sensitiveness to subtle effects, and what he did have was vital understanding of what had been mysterious in his blood and in music—and in Spring dawns and twilights. As he stood before her, he had a vision of a desire to ride with this goddess across sun-steeped spaces—moon-silvered sweeps of plain, to the end of things—or rather to the beginning; and the spark again showed in his eyes, and once more Louise Verick made a little mental nod of satisfaction.

Diana's attitude was not marked by any eye-spark, but it was obviously compliant.

Rupert Verick had had serious converse with his sister in this interval; converse which had been accompanied by papers and evidences of impending ruin, and which had laid upon her the obligation of saving them from poverty. And Diana had recognized her obligation and made her decision, according to the brave blood which was hers, and of which her brother seemed to have so pitifully small a portion. There had been a Dutch burgher's daughter as mésalliance who might have been held accountable, though she had neglected to transmit her thrift.

It had its cost, this decision of Diana's, for she was, inexplicably, a dreamer of dreams, a holder of ideals: inexplicably, because her rearing by a worldly old aunt had had for its letter and lesson the consummation of "a good match," each charm, each accomplishment being appraised to such end.

Diana had early been inclined to shirk her destiny. She had asked not only love, which her beauty made a reasonable exaction, but the portion of loving as well, in the face of innumerable

examples of husband and wife pursuing separate ways in apparent content. During her first season she was hopeful of life and expectant; accepting the surface of glitter as the earnest of joys. The second year had brought disillusionments and she had been capricious, breaking two excellent engagements on whimsical pretexts; and in this, her third, she had been pronounced difficult to an impossible degree at a conclave of the Verick kin which had been held before that revealing interview with her brother, and in which the latter had had its root.

The first had been a session of ultimatums and threatened hand-washing of the impecunious members if Diana were not what they called sensible. They had ceased to expect anything of Rupert, whose tinkling cleverness achieved no greater distinction than an occasional *mot* and the designing of freakish functions, so the burden was put upon Diana, and she had pledged herself to the indicated sensible course—quite naturally, despite her high ideals, for she was a woman reared to cushioned places, and the world loomed alarmingly big and dark when its combat was suggested.

Hence her graciousness to the young Texan, and hence, too, some designed display of charms. "If 'twere done, 'twere best done quickly," was the letter of her resolution, and early in February, in the midst of ante-Lenten gaieties, her engagement to Brant was announced. The wedding was to take place shortly after Easter.

His rôle of fiancé to a society beauty was sometimes perplexing to Brant. In telling his love and receiving his answer he found that he had acquired no heart-quickening memory. Recalling the hour, he marveled at how with a few calm sentences she had quieted the tumult of blood and pulse which he had brought to it. His recollection, fortunately, was never so entire as to realize that her lips had been mute velvet beneath the touch of his own.

It was distinct, however, in the detail of a later incident when they being, as they rarely were, alone together, he

had taken her suddenly in his arms and kissed her.

"Oh, my dear—boy," she had said, withdrawing from his clasp. "It's awfully nice of you to—feel that way about me, but really, you know, that sort of thing is so—*bourgeois*."

Her tone had been the tolerant one usually employed toward a child's unwitting error, and she had moved over to a mirror where she spent some time in giving readjusting touches to her gown and her hair.

Brant had stood silent, again marveling—a little that he should remain quiescent, and a great deal at the various meaning which it was obvious was read into the small French term. He had encountered it before, in his French study and in reading, but its translation had stood for nothing to his way of life—naturally it could not; but here—it came to him that, according to this inside code, it meant paying attention to your wife or fiancée, or openly speaking of your honest love, while, conversely, the semblance of devotion to a married woman or the boast of left-handed amours were allowed. And it was almost upon his lips to tell her that the little word appeared to be the ban upon all the things which a man has for his dreams. It was Brant's habit, however, to "sit tight and play up" to the accepted rules of whatever the game; so he had silently awaited her pleasure to take up conversation on trivial subjects.

This was really much of a misfortune for them both, for Diana had more than once acknowledged to herself that she could "almost care if he had only been content to be himself." It was not pleasant, certainly, to provoke that indulgent chiding from her, and he took thought not to pass the line she had defined as existent between "the desert and the sown."

It is foregone that it should come to be a dividing line between them also—impalpable, yet potent, setting its boundaries even when they rode together, which was their nearest approach to sympathetic companionship; causing Diana's eyes to search vaguely the

distances for the goal that a turn of her head might have revealed, in the dark gaze Brant often fixed upon her.

Among the people who had promptly made much of the young Texas multi-millionaire were Austin Travis and his wife. It was freely said among their intimates that they would have won him from the Rupert Vericks had it not been for Diana, Anita Travis being suspectedly free from any small scruple which might stand in the way of binding him to her interests.

Like the Rupert Vericks, this couple's kinship to so many of high estate gave them footing which only the most flagrant indiscretion could dislodge, and their income was even more problematical. Travis was vaguely and politely supposed to be with a firm of brokers, but there was nothing vague about his skill at bridge so long as he remained sober, which was not as frequently as their tradespeople could have wished.

Anita's sponsors had been as happy as Diana's in her naming. She was small, dark, vivacious. She had a cooing voice and she understood a lot of trickery with her eyes and her mouth-corners. They drooped the least bit naturally, and she was not the sort to allow any natural advantage to go to waste. The pose popularly attributed to her was that of the wearer of the mask of cheerfulness.

She was most sympathetic, and Brant soon found it easy to say what was in his mind to her, of any subject save Diana, and he was shortly spending many of his afternoon hours in her dainty drawing-room or in the more exclusive purlieus of her rose-hung den.

The gossip which this habit of his occasioned did not reach his ears, but Diana's were speedily assailed by it, with some summing up of the indisputable four acquired by equally certain twos, from that astute woman, her sister-in-law.

"There they were in that dim corner," Louise related with her vivid diction, "Anita working those eyelashes and her pathetic mouth for all they were worth, and your precious

stupid expressing sympathy clear through to the back of his head. Of course she was telling him what a martyr she is. That's her line—Bobby Leighton told me about how she confided in him. No one can blame young Brant—he doesn't know her, but it strikes me that you'd best come down from that pedestal of yours and look after your property. You know what Anita Travis is."

"I know what she is *said* to be," Diana answered with precision. She avoided the question of pedestals and property.

"Oh, well, you know *no* one believes less in condemning on gossip than I do, but everyone knows about Philip Reaburn, and then there were Grayson and—"

Diana made a gesture that conveyed disgust.

"The Travises are to dine here Thursday," she said pointedly. She had the primitive virtue of respect for hospitality.

"Well, I can't help it. So long as her relatives, the Van Twillers and the Westervelts, countenance her, one has to treat her civilly. Though," with conscious rectitude, "that can't make me approve of her conduct."

The smile Diana gave this sentiment did little to her mouth and nothing to her eyes.

She was already occupied with the ordering of her trousseau, but she was far from content these days. Still, she would have been at a loss to place finger upon definite regret. It was rather an unrest—vague, searching, that cast its weight against the practical advantages of her coming marriage, which advantages, with Louise's help, were kept pretty constantly before her.

Brant had proved his generosity and readiness to do her will without waiting for the assumption of her family's obligations. Rupert had been appointed to a sinecure holding of large salary on the Board of a Corporation in which he, Brant, held the controlling share, and he was as extravagantly lavish with gifts to her as she would permit.

Furthermore, since that repulsed caress he had not been at all exigent.

What more could be contained in her desire was the marvel which was often in her sister-in-law's speech, and though Diana never again replied with her one-time elemental candor, her answer then would have served. That he should wear, so virilely, the semblance and yet so lack, to her seeing, the will and way of the man of her ideals, was a circumstance which made her often unconsciously impatient with him and intolerant of herself.

Yet any and all threshing over only brought her to the same end. She was to marry Randolph Brant the last of April.

IV

LOUISE VERICK's acumen had not been at fault in her analysis of the situation when Anita and Brant had been discovered in the dim corner. It had been indeed a moment of confidence and of the expression of Brant's sympathy. He had seen a good deal of Austin Travis and felt capable of piecing together into a sorry whole the broken murmurs Anita allowed herself. And it was strong appeal to the quick, warm chivalry of his Southern blood.

Brant was not distinct as to his part in Anita's "wrecked life." Indeed, that he had any part therein, that she always welcomed him warmly and that he had a pleasant sense of rest in her presence were acceptable facts, but of no vast significance, he would have said, had the matter been put before him. His life had not tended to introspection or analysis. And the void which had stretched since Diana's repulse of his embrace grew insensibly narrower.

So he came to the first of March.

This season brought him to a day when he sat alone with Anita before her library fire in the violet-scented dusk of the late afternoon, but his accustomed sense of restfulness was shaken by the suggestion of agitation which her manner betrayed.

One moment she laughed and chattered the lightest nonsense, and the next her laces fluttered over deep-drawn sighs and she repressed quivers of her appealing mouth-corners. Brant attempted answer in kind to her conversational vagaries, but it was of relief to him when she arose and trailed her red draperies over to the piano.

Anita had the gift of sympathetic touch and the genius of choice, and Brant had many pulses which were akin to melody, so he was soon drawn across the room to her side where he stood leaning against the piano looking down at her with eyes that held the far-away searchings of dreams.

But it was a distinctly far-away quality, even when Anita sang, in an intimate little manner, snatches of this and that. A strain of opera—a popular rag-time measure—and then the haunting sweetness of Chaminade. Her voice was contralto, golden in the middle notes, and none of Rosamond's appeal was lost. "O pity me because I love," she sang, and then suddenly the melody was cut through by a crashing of the keys and she sprang to her feet; her hands flung up across her eyes, her supple figure swaying as if storm-driven. And inarticulate murmurs sounded in her white throat.

She was very near Brant. Her perfumed hair just brushed his sleeve, and without pausing for question he put out his arm to steady her. The next instant she was folded against him and he had kissed her.

How or why, Brant could not for his life have told nor did he then question. In the red blur which seemed to envelop him realization touched only on the consciousness that her lips had been flame of response to his own.

Words, the inspiration of this consciousness, might have followed had not his eyes been drawn as by some magnet to a large mirror at their side wherein through the open archway a portion of the hall and staircase was reflected. There he saw the image of Travis's face peering over the banisters at them, a face with all the evil of the man staring through. A moment only

it showed and then he had gone softly up the stairs, but not before Anita's quick glance following Brant's had encompassed him.

"Ah! how like him," she murmured, and the blood dropped out of her face. Then she had a surge of afterthought which bore suggestion of how this apparent unfortunate turn might be made to serve her. Divorce, remarriage, millions were the words which came with the underdrift of her mind, sweeping Diana from the perspective.

But Brant stood silent. For the first time in his life he was in the grip of a deadly fear—not of the retribution which in the South would swiftly follow his transgression—for it was eliminated in the best society, he had learned—nor of the scandal more likely to result, but a fear that entrenched upon loathing of the manner of man he had proved to have it within him to be; a man whose honor hung a thing of shreds whichever way he should choose, for his senses beat insistently the recollection of Diana and his pledge to her.

Anita waited a few tense moments and then spoke again, sadly, with the effect of resignation.

"Well—it is the end—and I don't know that I'm sorry. I've borne so much—I—I suppose I can bear this, too, though it doesn't seem—fair, after all *he's* done—that it should fall on *me*. It's the way of the world—it's always the woman who goes to the wall. The eleventh commandment, 'Thou shalt not be found out,' was written for them, evidently. It makes no difference for men," she added, with a pitiful little attempt at a laugh.

It brought Brant out of his stupor like a whiplash.

"Don't!" he said, as if the word was wrenched from him. "He will of course—misunderstand," he went on slowly. "No one can blame him—and there seems no way of explaining—convincing him of the truth. I don't know how to—to apologize—to ask you to forgive me," he said miserably.

"Is there need of that—between us—Randolph?" she questioned very softly.

"There must be. There—there is Miss Verick," he said.

His hesitation struck a jealous wrath through Anita's caution. She laughed again, stridently.

"Diana!" she scoffed. "That icicle—she wouldn't lift a finger for you—she cares only for your money. She's—"

"Hush!" he said sternly. He paused, his harrowed young face very white. "I am bound to her," he said slowly. He did not say to this woman, "I love her." The words stuck in his throat, but every pulse of his body was telling it to his suddenly awakened consciousness.

"I see," Anita said. "And—you—owe *me*—nothing?"

She had control of herself again and was gentle; her graceful head bent under the sorrow and the threatened disaster of his causing. She looked the very figure of innocent suffering, and so she brought his presumable obligation home to Brant as she had failed to do with her scorn.

"Let—me—think," he murmured brokenly, and he half turned from her in groping thought for a way out of the labyrinth of dishonor in which he stood.

Turned thus he again faced the mirror, and thus, too, he presently lifted absent eyes to catch the reflection of a look in Anita's face which was the baring of her unlovely soul. Keen, it was, and shrewdly calculating, narrowing her lids and sharpening her pupils. He swung around and caught its force before she could veil it with her sweeping lashes, and the effect was the stripping of all veneers of convention, even civilization from him.

"Every penny of my money, if you like," he said harshly, "but never my father's name."

Then he left the room and the house.

V

RANDOLPH BRANT was never certain of how he reached his rooms that evening. There was a hiatus between the moment he left the Travises' house and

that when he found himself automatically putting on his evening clothes, which was always a blank to him. But that it harbored a tumult of brain and blood he could not doubt, and it continued with him when he went to fulfil a long-standing dinner engagement with some eminent captains of other people's industry.

No women being present, there was not so much demand on him for conversation, and Brant sat for the most part silent, hearing prices per gallon, and rates and rebates, over a raging mental conflict whose salient touches were of reproach for himself and disgust for the woman—the woman whose trickery her look had revealed. And his imagination was busy with the circumstance that would follow his marriage in April—the divorce suit and the name that his father had kept clean dragged in the dust. He winced at the thought, and it was not strange that he emptied his wine-glasses until, by-and-bye, it was all of small consequence and he was laughing uproariously at a great man's feeble attempts at wit.

Later the party went to Barton's, a private gambling-place which held to its open sesame as strictly as the most exclusive clubs. Here they came upon Austin Travis sitting at a table with three other men. The game was clearly a heavy one. All of their faces were tense, and Travis's was flushed, his hands unsteady. Almost before Brant's own clouded vision had given him recognition he hailed the Texan in a voice of cheerful comradeship.

"Hello, Brant!" he said. "Just the fellow I wanted to see. Can you help me out for an hour or so? Say five thousand." He advanced, his eyes meeting the other's with the utmost nonchalance.

It was obvious that he believed Brant ignorant of his knowledge. Other things were also immediately obvious. The words and the look cleared Brant's drink-blurred brain like a burst of light. This man had seen him with his wife in his arms and now he asked a loan of money from him. There could be no subtleties

about *this* analysis. Brant's hot young blood had swift impulse for the use of his two involuntarily clenched fists, but he had, if not saner, more practical second thought and asked for a cheque-book.

No one looked surprised. This had happened before, how often Brant was all at once aware—and his memory gave no record of the loans' return.

The cheque given into Travis's hands, who received it still in the manner of assured intimacy, Brant spent a torturous hour with his friends, dropping a few hundreds at roulette, and then he pleaded an early business engagement for the morning as excuse for leaving.

Out in the raw night air he walked for miles without sense of distance or direction, his brain busy with the revolting detail of its suddenly illumined places. Every scandal and whisper of gossip trooped out of his memory to join it, and the summing-up he made of it all was sweeping—entire. His father had been quite right. This society game was not the game for honest women and men, for here the women filched the betrothed, even the husbands of other women, and the men sold their wives' kisses. His young senses sickened at the thought, and he was ready to declare that all who moved within the circle of glitter were alike, forgetting, or unknowing, that while he had been received into exclusive houses, his intimacies had been among the hangers-on, and he continued unsparing in his arraignment until he came to Diana. He could not but shalt with thought of *her*—Diana's eyes had such a true look—yet, too, the look of Anita had been the same until that moment of revelation. How could one tell what forces lay beneath? Certainly not one who had been reared in the big, clean spaces of the outside—the big, clean spaces for which he suddenly hungered.

He wanted, avidly, the feel of the wind from many miles on his face and in his lungs. He wanted a sky-line that didn't crowd one, and most of all he wanted his accustomed standard

of honor which was definite in its lines. And he would have them, too. Travis might sue and be damned. He might mulct him for any sum he pleased, and these people from their twisted angle might cast the reproach of cowardice upon his name if they liked. It all stood for nothing to him. He would go back, and the events of these months should be cut out of his life as one would cut out a poison spot.

His conclusion did not include Diana. How could it? Diana rose in vision before him in her most perfect poise, and she did not fit into the life outside. The picture of them riding together through the ways of it had been but an illusion of a feverish fancy, he was assured, and he was done with illusions. It would hurt, of course, to put Diana out of his life, but the surgeon's knife always hurt though it cut for ultimate good, and as to the hurt to her, he was singularly indifferent.

The insidious doubt suggested by Anita's accusation of her had been recurrent, bringing recollections of support. He was vividly aware now of the muteness of her mouth under his own, and thus what hurt she would feel would be but simple justice. His pulse for reprisal just then was strong and indiscriminating.

Randolph Brant came to a realizing sense of his surroundings, and slumped into a corner of a Park bench. It was dawn, very gray and chill, and he had remembrance that in Texas the trees were green—and the violets in bloom. And he was here! The folly of it was his deepest impression, and he started off with sudden energy to find a cab. In a manner, it was the beginning of his way back.

Bath, breakfast and a fresh toilet failed to alter his outlook. He took an almost vicious pleasure in refusing the invitations the morning mail brought to him and in the preparations for his journey. He worked with a feverish celerity which infected even the deliberate Wilkins, and by eleven o'clock his possessions were packed, his bills were paid and the order sent for his car to

be attached to one of that night's south-bound trains.

Then he went to his interview with Diana, still iron against her kind who had tricked him of his faith in women and men.

It was not until she came down to him in her habit that he remembered there had been an engagement for him to ride with her that morning. His negligence, however, did not touch him. Brant's mood admitted the consideration of no small conventionalities.

Diana had come into the room with a distinct hauteur of bearing, for he was late, but it vanished when she saw him. His face bore more plainly the mark of bad hours than he himself knew, and showed very white and worn, the youth gone out of his eyes.

"Randolph," she said, with more of spontaneity than ever before; but Brant let it pass him.

The sight of her so, as she had first appeared to him and inspired his heart-held vision of their riding together over sun-steeped plains, had the singular effect of moving him to greater wrath.

What right, he questioned of his soul, had she to wear such semblance when she was willing to sell herself to him? What right had her eyes to look true when her heart might harbor any evil? It was even so that Anita's eyes had long looked—Brant most unreasonably based all his premises on this, and he went brutally to the core of things.

He crossed to her side without word of greeting and taking her yet ungloved left hand almost roughly drew his glittering ring from her finger.

"Give it back to me," he said hoarsely. "It can't be yours. It must belong to a girl who can live outside with me. I'm done with your society lot. I'm going back outside, where we live our passions honestly and do our buying and selling in the open. I'll find a girl there—some day. She may not be as beautiful as you, but, by God, I'll not buy her. You haven't broken me among you!" he raged.

Diana listened, pride first in arms

and then in the dust. His words cut like swift, sharp knife-strokes through the sheathing of training and custom which encased her, and she had the sensation of the release of her soul—the falling of scales from her eyes, revealing him as the fulfilment of her desire—a man, fearlessly himself. And all the beatings of her heart were response to the full, strong pulses that were his. She made no question as to processes of revelation. She even put aside his arraignment and repudiation of her. The situation's only reading to her was that she loved him and that his loss meant the emptiness of life.

A flare of crimson surged to her face, and she took an impulsive step toward where he stood turned from

her in scorn, reaching her denuded hand out to him.

"Don't you believe—that—I could live—outside—too?" she softly questioned.

Brant wheeled, unsteady under the stress of an almost incredulous revulsion—wheeled to see that the calm gray of her eyes was calm no longer and the color of love, and that her firm mouth-corners were very yielding and sweet; and the angry heat in his blood gave place to a tender warmth.

It was not a moment for words. He swept her to him with the almost savage force of his arms, and again there was the touch of lip-flame beneath his own—the flame that is given to women to light the hearth-fire of home.



SOUVENIR DE BOHÈME

By Ludwig Lewisohn

OLD thoughts, dear thoughts
Come to me again,
How we were together
In the wind and rain.

Close to me you nestled
In the glimmering street,
And we had no refuge
Where to turn our feet.

Blue curves the sky now,
Yellow burns our fire,
And we are at home now
With our hearts' desire.

But old thoughts, dear thoughts
Come to me again,
How we two wandered lonely
In the wind and rain.



WITH EDITING

DYER—I don't object to my wife having the last word.
ENPEC—I wouldn't if mine would cut out some of those before it.

THE TOOTH OF TIME

A BALLADE OF THE FORGOTTEN

By Beatrice St. George

DIM in the annals of bygone ages
Trace their names where they first were laid:
Poets, potentates, fools and sages,
Safely cloaked in forgotten shade.
Bold and brave was the show they made,
Lusty and gay in life's young dawn:
Now to ashes and dust betrayed
While Time, like a rat in the dark, gnaws on.

Words they scrawled on the world's blank pages,
Fought and feasted, and worked and played;
Earned their dole and spent their wages,
Hushed their voices that wept or prayed;
Into the bosom of silence strayed,
Worn-out children to slumber gone,
Quieted now, and unafraid,
While Time, like a rat in the dark, gnaws on.

Never a passion their rest engages,
Fame, or fortune, or humble trade;
Shall they listen, however rages
The present hour with its turmoil swayed?
Past and future together weighed
Seemeth to them as a circle drawn.
Little they heed and are undismayed,
While Time, like a rat in the dark, gnaws on.

L'ENVOI

Prince Death cometh with sweeping blade,
Ready alike for brain and brawn.
And all shall meet him, and none evade,
While Time, like a rat in the dark, gnaws on.



MARRIAGE is the result of falling in love at first sight. Divorce comes when you get your second sight.

THE WAIL OF A WAITRESS

By Ethel M. Kelley

SHE ain't so much! I seen her at the show.
If she's a ravin' beauty, I don't know
What good looks is, an' I sha'n't never learn.
I think my shape is just as good as hern;
My hair looks pretty when I do it low.

Gee, when I seen her face I got a blow.
I thought the girl that got him for a beau
Would be a person that had style to burn—
She ain't so much!

That kind is only lookin' for the dough.
I think somebody'd oughter tell him so
Before he spends more money'n he can earn.
"Tain't up to me to do him a good turn,
But if it was, I'd say, "I feel as though
She ain't so much!"



HIS PLUNDER

"DURING my somewhat checkered and perhaps more or less useful career," acridiruminatingly said Uncle Timrod Totten, "I have learned a great many things about what, for want of a better name, we call human nature, by observing my fellow men as they filed past me in endless procession adown the corridors of time.

"For instance, I have come to believe that it is very sweet, but exceedingly unusual, to find Doctors of Divinity dwelling together in unity. I have also gathered that it is almost impossible to convince an oldest inhabitant that the good die young. I have observed that the downward path is not downy, and have been led to believe that one of the greatest of our many blessings is that whiskers don't come out green in the Spring. I have found that the pen is vastly more incriminating than the sword. I have often seen it demonstrated that in a suit in court it is a poor law that won't work both jays, and I have decided that I'd rather be wrong than be a member of the Legislature. Furthermore—

"Oh, well, these are only a very few of the many chunks of sarcastic philosophy that I have accumulated as I have come along down the line, but I can't say that they are of any particular value to me, for I have grown so absent-minded that I forget to make use of them at the times when they would be effective as repartee; and, besides, I have sorter decided that I am 'most too old to be continually squabbling with the people around me."

TOM P. MORGAN.



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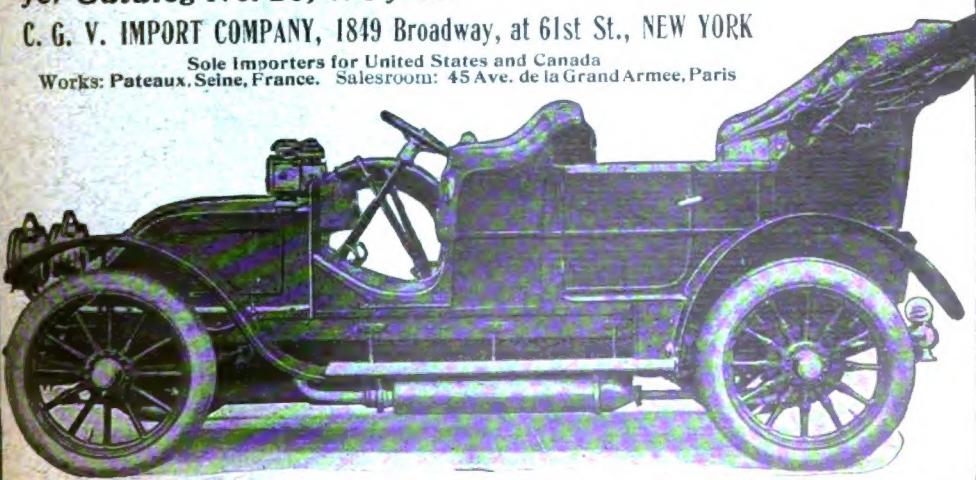
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